

# BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

MAY - JUNE 2003

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THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Vol. 47, No. 3

MAY-JUNE 2003

FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editor

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## THE FRONT COVER

This fine 1882 Sells Bros. Circus Strobridge lithograph featured Charles Fish. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

## THE BACK COVER

This is the back cover of the 1906 Campbell Bros. Great Consolidated Shows courier. It was printed by the Erie Litho Co. and is from the Pfening Archives.

## THE 2003 CHS CONVENTION

CHS President Al Stencell has announced tentative schedule of the CHS convention to be held in Peru, Indiana July 16 to 19.

Wednesday July 16, Registration noon to five. That night the group will attend a performance of the Peru Festival Circus at seven.

Thursday July 17. Papers will be presented in the morning and afternoon at the high school. In the evening the annual auction will be held at the high school.

Friday July 18. Papers will be presented in the morning and afternoon at the high school. Charles Conrad's paper on bandleader Fred Jewell will be illustrated with a 35 piece circus band. A pre-banquet concert at the

Elks Hall will be present by the Charles Conrad band. The banquet will be held at 8 P. M.

Saturday July 19. CHS members will have seats in the grandstand for the Festival parade.

In the afternoon the group will visit the Circus Hall of Fame museum and attend the three o'clock big top show. The evening will be free for socializing and dinner on your own.

Please send items for the auction to Tom Dunwoody, 3076 East Circus Lane, Peru, Indiana 46970 or bring it with you. If you have questions call Al Stencell at 416-694-4545.

## NEW MEMBERS

Edward D. Jordan  
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Brian M. Smith 4342  
6938 Boggs Rd.

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- 1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
- 1972-All available.
- 1973-All but Nov.-Dec.
- 1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
- 1975-All available.
- 1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
- 1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
- 1978-All available.
- 1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
- 1980-1986-All available.
- 1987-All but Nov.-Dec.
- 1988-2002-All available.

Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

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## ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN CIRCUS, 1793 - 1860

Long out of print, this three volume history has been re-issued in a single 650 page book that sells, postpaid, for \$55.00. This is a 8 1/2 x 11 paperback, fully illustrated, and brought up to date (Volume I was re-printed in 1993, but volume II hasn't been seen since 1986). This is a very limited edition, and I'm a very old man, so this is probably the last time around.

Available from the author:

Stuart Thayer  
430 17th Avenue East  
Seattle, WA 9812

# Lillian Leitzel A Circus Diva

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

"A dainty, darling queen of the air who performs astonishing feats of muscular skill while ascending and descending a suspended rope. Positively the world's greatest women aerialist." So said the circus program. Who was this wonder woman?

Leopoldina Altiza Pelikan was born in Breslau, Germany on January 2, 1892. She received a balanced education that included training in music, dance and five languages. Her schooling was in Breslau and Berlin conservatories. Her talent on the piano so impressed her teachers that they felt she could pursue a concert career. However, she chose to join her mother as an aerialist.

Elinor (Zoe) Pelikan and her two sisters Toni and Tina were an aerial act called the Vandis Troupe. The revolving electrical trapeze rigging was designed by Mr. Pelikan.

When she was twelve, her grandmother took her for her yearly visit

Leitzel in 1915 at age 23. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

to see her mother, then playing the Empire in London. The traditional one week visit was extended to three months. While watching her mother's act practice Altiza asked to be lifted to the rigging. When the Vandis act was playing the London Hippodrome the following season little Altiza was a member of the troupe, replacing one of her aunts.

After working in European and London music halls and theaters the act came to America in 1908 to appear with Barnum & Bailey during the New York engagement. After arriving in New York they changed their name to the Leamy Ladies, selecting the name from their American agent Edward T. "Ted" Leamy who died in Syracuse, New York, in 1916.

But their reception in this country was not as strong as on the continent.

The Leamy Ladies returned to Barnum & Bailey in 1911 and were with the show the entire season. Madison Square Garden program listed Display 10 as: "A just added European importation sensational aerial offering of unrivaled magnitude, The Leamy Ladies, a novel and skillfully scientific gymnastic feature, in which the daring of these dauntless mid-air artists is exquisitely enhanced by the grace and picturesqueness of their performance. Wonderful feats of fearlessness and agility in, on and over an illuminated giant wheel, which is made to rapidly revolve by the clever manipulation of a suspended bicycle. Last winter's crowning fea-



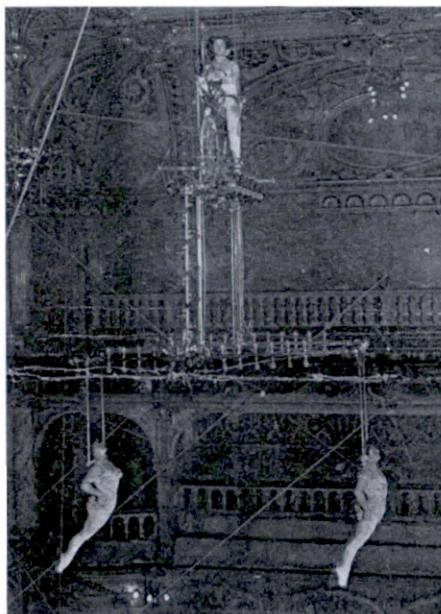
The Leamy Ladies around 1905, Leitzel is on left. Circus World Museum collection.

ture in Paris and Vienna. The only act of its kind in the world."

Following the 1911 season the ladies returned to Europe, but with-



The aerial rigging used by the Leamy Ladies. Circus World Museum collection.



out the younger Pelikan, who Americanized her name to Lillian Alice. For a while she teamed with Annie DeHoman in a double trap act called the DeHoman Sisters. This act appeared with Welsh Bros. Circus in 1913.

Special 1916 three sheet litho featuring Leitzel.

After her death her brother, Alfred G. Pelikan wrote in part to Karl Kae Knecht: "Our parents were in the theatrical business, my father being a manager of a troupe which included my mother, my sister and two aunts. My godparents were Bohemian; my grandfather was a skilled cabinet maker.

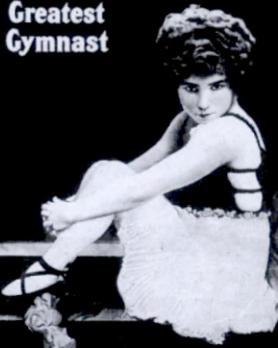
"Both Leitzel and I were educated first in Germany, and later in England.

Leitzel on Ringling Bros. around 1918.



## MISS LEITZEL PHYSICAL MARVEL

World's  
Greatest  
Gymnast



## RINGLING BROS CIRCUS

"All of this time my sister and I were practicing gymnastics and since my sister was destined to follow this line of work, she of course performed from time to time with the troupe in the interim of her school work.

"The name 'Leitzel' is a derivation of the name Alice, which in German and Bohemian, is pronounced 'Alitz.' The word 'Leitzel' is an endearment usually used to a child, which stuck to her all through her life and which she adopted as her stage name."

The little four foot nine inch lady received a contract to play the Orpheum theater circuit with a Roman rings aerial act.

Later Leitzel with another girl aerialist formed an act called "Miss Leitzel," assisted by Miss Jeanette, "Queen of the Air." While playing vaudeville they appeared in South Bend, Indiana, the week of November 19, 1914. William Dunkle, later an Indiana CFA. State Chairman, was then press agent of the Orpheum Theater where she appeared. Noting the exceptional ability and class of the act, Dunkle told Fred Warrell, then superintendent of Ringling Bros. Circus, who was spending a few weeks in his old home town. Warrell went to see the act and was so impressed that he tendered Leitzel a tentative contract, which was later, consummated by Charles Ringling.

She made her début with the Ringling show in 1915. Lillian found a home where she was to remain for the rest of her career. Her act lasted eight minutes. The first part was a standard Roman ring routine. She finished with a long series of one arm planges. Leitzel usually did around sixty to one hundred planges in her act. The highest number she ever did was 249.

Her first contract with Ringling was signed on January 18, 1915. It called for her to present a first class aerial ring act. The show agreed to



Leitzel and her prop boy who may have been her first husband.

pay her two hundred dollars a week during the Chicago engagement and \$150 during the traveling season.

Leitzel with her maid Mable Clemings around 1925.



The show was to furnish her with a stateroom during the travel. Leitzel's 1917 contract was signed on October 11, 1916 and she was paid the same \$200 in Chicago and \$165 on the road. One change stated that the show would furnish her a small dressing room tent if desired.

A three sheet special bill featuring Leitzel used in 1923.

An article in the April 1923 *Strength* magazine described the plange: "The feat is accomplished by holding the rings with both hands, drawing the feet up in front, passing them over the head and straightening the body and legs full length from the shoulders in a horizontal position, (this is known professionally as a two-arm plange, and in itself is very difficult when properly executed). From this position Miss Leitzel releases one hand, and still retains the horizontal position. Miss Leitzel sometimes uses but

Alfredo Codona and Leitzel in 1928.



one arm to place the body in the one-arm plange).

In 1915 she worked in display 7 with aerial acts over five rings and stages, but she was over the center ring with her Roman rings and arm planges. Again in 1916 she appeared over the center ring with the other acts.

For unknown reasons her contract was not renewed by Ringling for the 1917 season. Instead Leitzel was signed for a limited time on Barnum & Bailey. She opened in Madison Square Garden

on March 29 and closed in Philadelphia on May 5.

An interesting exchange of telegrams between John and Charles Ringling told the story. On May 2 John wired Charles asking if he wanted Leitzel for the big towns in the east. Charles answered, "Would like to have Leitzel for Eastern country. Think we should get her for \$200 all other conditions same as before. Wire if arrangements can be made as I can cheapen salaries here if we get her." John wired back, "Leitzel will accept two hundred, private tent and insists on conveyance to cars at night, Answer quick as she leaves us tonight." On May 7 John wired Charles, "Leitzel will join you at Washington."

True to her hard nosed personality Leitzel wired Charles Ringling on May 8, "When I talked to Mr. John he told me I was to have first class stateroom in ninety one car worse than eighty six stateroom in either car too small. Also expect answer regarding other matter Mr. Warrell knows of. Expect everything to be as stated by Mr. John. I do not want any misunderstanding after I get there. Please wire at once care Ansonia Hotel."

Charles answered saying the

re-arrangements on stateroom would try to be made. "Now wire me that you will join the show in Washington Monday."

Leitzel returned to the Ringling show for two hundred a week.

Around this time she eloped with a property man.

Her Ringling Bros. contract for 1917 read: "First class aerial ring act. Employers agree to pay artist the sum of Two Hundred (\$200) dollars per week and to furnish the artist a state room during the traveling season; also furnish artist a small dressing room tent if desired."

It can be assumed that the same contract provisions applied when she was sent to the Barnum & Bailey show in 1917.

Leitzel returned to the Ringling show in 1918. She was described in the program as "The entire arena is here surrendered to Mlle Leitzel, queen of the aerial gymnasts who has amazed all Europe with her wonderful feats of strength and endurance, suspended at dizzy heights this miniature marvel of mid-air breaks every law of gravity casting her body over her own shoulder scores of times without pause."

Leitzel continued with the combined Ringling-Barnum show in 1919. She now had a large private

This two sheet litho was printed in France for Leitzel's Cirque d' Hiver engagement in 1928.





Leitzel relaxing in her dressing tent in the late 1920s.

compartment on train, a maid, and an auto chauffeur. Willie Mosher her chauffeur, dressed in a hotel doorman's uniform, carried her to the ring on muddy days, accompanied by her maid Mable Clemings. Leitzel had the arena to herself in Madison Square Garden. On the road she was center ring with four other acts in the same display. Her contract called for a higher salary during the Garden engagement. By then her husband the property man was long gone.

In his book *The Big Top* Fred Bradna told of Leitzel: "I have known many illustrious circus performers, but by far the most fascinating I encountered in more than forty years under the big top was Lillian Leitzel. For twelve of the years I was Ringling equestrian director, Leitzel commanded a pre-eminence never attained by another star in any cir-

The beauty on the Roman rings.



cus on earth. She was the fieriest, hottest tempered, most famous—and at times the most lovable—individual I ever met. Leitzel was in a class by herself.

"Once aloft, she performed for six minutes on two rings eight inches in diameter, which

were suspended from separate ropes a few feet below the canvas peak, to the accompaniment of the *William Tell* Overture.

"At the conclusion of this turn, she descended to the ring, bowed, and was pulled aloft on a swiveled rope on which she did her specialty, technically known as the plange turn. She swung her little body up to the level of her shoulder, hesitated momentarily and then, using her shoulder as an axis, propelled her body over itself until she dangled again by one arm. She repeated this revolution many times. On the fortieeth roll she loosed a hairpin, and her hair swept profusely about her shoulders during the final gyrations.

"Her wrist was continually chafed and raw, necessitating bandage and unguents, and when the condition became acute, she made her turns with the left hand.

"Highly conscious of her position (as a star), Leitzel was a genius at wheedling favors from the management, and more than any other person is responsible for the great change from sordid to sumptuous living quarters for which all latter-day stars must bless her memory. Leitzel persuaded the Ringlings to give her a private Pullman car in which to travel, and the most luxurious dressing tent ever staked

in the backyard. Having been a concert pianist in her youth, Leitzel transported a piano with her throughout the season. It was set up in her railroad car. On dull afternoons between shows she gathered the circus children about her, told them stories to the accompaniment of her own music."

In 1920 she married Clyde Ingalls, side show manager and big show announcer. Ingalls was married when the two became interested in each other. Their marriage lasted four years.

Ringling-Barnum programs in the 1920s indicate that she continued to perform alone in Madison Square



Bird Millman, May Wirth and Leitzel.

Garden, but with other acts on the road.

During her career with Ringling-Barnum she exhibited a bad temper with frequent outbursts. She often slapped prop hands and then later gave them a twenty-dollar bill. On the other hand she had a great relationship with the children on the show and entertained them in her spacious back yard dressing tent.

As the diva of the big show she was jealous of May Wirth, Bird Millman, Ella Bradna and Con Colleano, other featured performers.

Bradna said: "She was the tour de force of the publicity department, which romanticized the manner in

which she charmed her admirers from coast to coast. She was the first hostess of the backyard, after Mrs. Charlie Ringling."

Leitzel was charming and sometimes provocative in her dress. Often she would parade around in flimsy see-through dressing gowns. In his book the *Circus Kings*, Henry Ringling North recalled visiting her at a winter date for Fred Bradna. Leitzel was in a snit with Bradna about faultily hanging of her rigging. North said "In my military high school uniform I went to knock on her dressing room door, and she screamed between lurid oaths that she wanted to be let alone. 'It's me, Buddy North,' I yelled.

"The door flew open and a radiant Leitzel jumped at me and hung around my neck. After the effervescence of her greeting subsided, she admired my uniform and I admired her lack of same, for she was nude to the waist."

Leitzel held court daily in her big private top in the back yard. It was a square push pole structure. A rug covered the ground and awning covered half of the area. It held a couple of folding chairs and a table. The inside served as a dressing room and rest area. George Brinton Beal wrote: "One incident particularly in which I figured with Leitzel, I remember above all others for it was so typical of her attitude towards life and her philosophy of living. It happened during the Boston run of the show, soon after the move indoors at the then new Boston Garden.

"Miss Leitzel had invited me to drop in for a little chat with her during the matinee, immediately following her act. It was her custom, when she came back to her dressing area to strip and wrap herself in a blanket and take a brief rest on her cot. Sometimes, when there was anyone she particularly cared to talk with she would invite them in during that brief rest period.

"I had just come in and we were talking, Leitzel prone on her cot



Leitzel entertaining a child in her train compartment. Circus World Museum collection.

Indian fashion in her blanket, I in a folding chair, when, following a stirring on the door one of the show's press agents came hustling in.

"You'll have to get up and dress, Miss Leitzel, he broke in without introduction, I have the Governor of Massachusetts coming in to see you.

"Leitzel raised up on one elbow and looked at the excited press agent and started to do a disappearance.

"Tell the Governor I am entertaining a friend and he will have to wait,

Alfredo Codona, on right, at the monument in California.



motioning me to sit down again. Calmly she turned to me and resumed our interrupted conversation. In bewilderment the press agent looked first at her and then at me still shaking his head, departed, closing the door softly behind him."

When Alfredo Codona joined the Ringling-Barnum show in the mid-1920s Leitzel turned her attention to the Mexican flyer. Fred Bradna said: "Next her eyes settled on the one man in the circus world whose prestige, skill and temper were the equal of her own: Alfredo Codona, the greatest aerialists of all time.

"Mexican-born of a Spanish father and an English mother, Codona was thrilled to be admitted to the select company which surrounded Leitzel. Her dressing tent radiated culture, which Codona, of lowly origin and little schooling, was striving to achieve. He had reached the top of his profession; now he wanted to be worthy of it.

"Leitzel became his tutor. Her dressing tent, by now an elaborate dwelling spread with Oriental rugs, graced with fresh flowers on elegant tables, dignified by a uniformed maid and a major domo, was the ideal setting for the afternoon tête-à-tête between the two most celebrated personalities of the circus."

When Codona's marriage collapsed in 1927, the departure of his wife perhaps focused Leitzel's blue eyes romantically upon him. Leitzel and Codona were married in July 1928.

Even then she showed her true colors when she made him wait three hours at the altar.

Bradna continued: "Fate was unkind to their union from the start. Leitzel permitted her millionaire Chicago friend to give a wedding supper after the evening performance, and Codona hunted several hours for his bride before he found her. His resultant tantrum affected his timing aloft for several days."

Henry North told of the wedding: "Though Leitzel was well into her

thirties that year, she looked like a high-school girl, and a small one at that; while Alfredo looked like the boy next door. They were so radiantly happy that their faces wore, not professional smiles, but broad grins."

In the late 1920s Leitzel and Codona accepted bookings in Europe during the winter months.

During the winter months Leitzel usually worked in big time vaudeville, in Ziegfeld Follies or went abroad to do European circuses and music halls. During the 1928-1929 off-circus season while appearing at the Cirque d' Hiver in Paris she contracted double pneumonia and had to cancel Berlin and other cities. It was feared then she couldn't work for a long time, if ever. She was not able open the 1929 season with the circus in Madison Square Garden in New York City, but joined it later for the Boston engagement.

Leitzel's contract for the 1931 season was signed on November 26, 1930. It read: "Aerial ring act as previously presented by the artist in the circus of employers.

"Employers to supply state room in sleeping car.

"Artist to carry her own property man to properly install the apparatus, and also to carry a maid, the artist to pay for their services but not for their meals. Miss Leitzel to supply her own private dressing tent, size four breadths by four breaths canvas and all rope, blocks and falls use in connection with her apparatus.

"Miss Leitzel to be excused from tournament and parade." She was to receive \$350 per week.

Although there were many references to Leitzel being provided a private train car her contracts state that she was provided a compartment on the Ringling-Barnum train, which may have been as large as a third of a car.

In February of 1931 Leitzel was playing the Vlanecia Music Hall Gardens in Copenhagen. At the same time Codona was playing the Winter Garden in Berlin. On Friday the 13th



A half sheet poster of Leitzel used in 1926.

1931 as she started her planges the brass swivel crystallized and broke, causing Leitzel to fall 29 feet to the floor, landing on her head and shoulders. Her rigger, Frank McClosky, was spotting her but was distracted when she fell. Codona, learning the news, rushed to her side. Copenhagen doctors were confident that she would recover. She insisted that Codona return to finish his booking in Berlin. The two headed back to Berlin, where she died two days later on Sunday, February 15th.

A classic studio view of Leitzel.



She was cremated and her ashes were sent to the United States by boat.

An AP article dated April 3 read: "While the circus with which she won renown opened in Madison Square Garden, the ashes of Lillian Leitzel, world famed aerial artist, who fell to her death at Copenhagen February 15 (sic) came home to New York today in golden urn.

"They were brought on the *Mauetania* by Alfredo Codona, husband of Miss Leitzel and himself a noted aerial performer. He expects to deposit the ashes in the Codona crypt in Los Angeles where his parents live."

The September 30, 1931 *Greater Show World* noted: "Lillian Leitzel left an estate valued at \$30,000 gross and \$20,821 net. The entire estate was left to her husband, Alfredo Codona."

The March 1931 *White Tops* included an article about Leitzel's death. It read in part: "Leitzel was a fatalist, as most performers doing daring acts are.

"Physically this star was the epitome of daintiness. It was also a big contributing factor to her act. Strong of shoulder and arms and hands she could toss her little body high and over her shoulder as could no other performer. She was 4 feet 8 inches in her stocking feet, and her average weight was 90 to 102 pounds. She wore the smallest of shoes, a No. 1 1/2 C.

"She was the highest salaried woman circus performer in the world.

"She was scheduled to be with the Big One again in 1931.

"Her New York City home was in an apartment that she maintained on 7th Avenue just north of 53d street.

"She had trophies and honors from many lands.

"There isn't a man who can do her work," Codona often said. "I do her roll turn on the rope (she could roll upward on a suspended rope) and look like a doll. In Europe they go wild when she appears."

"She also always commended her husband's ability. 'There is no other

act,' she would say, 'like Alfredo's for courage, for grace or for skill. In Paris and in London and Berlin the audiences couldn't see anything else.'

"Leitzel was interested in the CFA. from the very first. She knew what real circus fans were. She was ever most gracious and hospitable to them. She was with us at our organization meeting in Washington, D. C., at our Chicago and Des Moines National conventions, and at many Tent, State Top and private CFA parties.

"Your editor appreciates and thanks all CFA. members and others who sent so many clippings, wires, letters and notes regarding Leitzel's death. Newspapers the country over carried extra long stories, in many towns where CFA were they assisted the newspapers with details, comments and photos which the press services did not have. Dexter Fellows, dean of press agents, came forth with some facts, which news services credited to him. The *New York Journal* had a full half page of pictures and sketches. Most papers of the country carried glowing editorials. Would that we had space to reprint them. Not in a long time have we seen anyone receive so much space.

"Alfred Pelikan, Leitzel's brother in Milwaukee, was showered with telegrams and letters expressing sympathy, from all parts of the world, including many CFAs. He is planning to make a memorial book, giving the newspaper accounts, photographs and letters. He also hopes to dedicate to his sister a book, entitled, *The Child As An Artist*.

"When the boat carrying Leitzel's ashes arrives in New York harbor an airplane will fly out and over it while a wreath will be dropped from it to the ship.

"On the circus and among friends the little star was familiarly known and referred to as 'Leitzel.'

"On February 17 in New York City the opening of the hockey match in Madison Square Garden was held up while all lights were dimmed, as when Leitzel appeared there. The spotlight fell on a man on the ice in the center of the arena, he said: 'To the Memory of Lillian Leitzel. God



Leitzel being treated by Dr. William Shields.

Rest Her Soul.' The band played *Auld Lang Syne*, the last selection always used for the last night of the circus season, and the drums rolled as they did when Leitzel did her one-arm giant half-flange act, 100 times-then the lights went on-the hockey game began.

"She liked applause, lived on it and she certainly did get it.

"Leitzel always stood at the back door and watched the Flying Codona act in which Alfredo, her husband, was featured--but when it came time for him to do his triple somersault

Another studio photograph of the Queen of the Circus.



she would not look but turned her head-ever fearful that he would miss and fall.

"There have been several imitators of Leitzel's act but none ever did it just exactly the same. It is said she performed several feats that no male gymnast ever attempted.

"Her hobby was dolls. She liked Boston bull dogs and always had two, which were always cavorting around her tent. She had a deathly fear that a spider would drop down from the top of the tent on her bare shoulder and bite her."

An article in the April 25, 1931 *Liberty* magazine included an interview with Leitzel at the end of the 1930 season. It read in part: "My entire childhood was spent in intensive training for my life's work. When I was two years old I began lessons in toe dancing; a little later juggling was added; and finally came bar work. In a few years I was working six hours a day at strenuous physical labor. That and my studies completely filled my life.

"Mother was the leader of a troupe, already famous in Europe, and that gave me a definite goal toward which to work. The example of what I might become constantly before my eyes, and mother's promise that when I could do the work I would be added to the troupe, spurred me on. When I was eleven years old I was ready to join them. Mother said I was perfect, and I must have been pretty good, for when Mr. Ringling cabled, asking her to come to New York for the opening three weeks in Madison Square Garden, he stipulated that I was to come along. This youthful triumph was wisely kept from me, and it was many years before I saw the cablegram.

"When I next came to America I came alone and as a feature performer, a very youthful one, weighing only eighty-two pounds, but making up for that deficiency in a superabundance of confidence. When I think now of the things I did on the rings in those days, I shudder.

"Only half the battle is won when you reach stardom, the other and harder part is staying there. It is so easy to relax, and so fatal. My act depends on strength and endurance,



Leitzel as she was about to climb the rope to her rigging.

and these can only be maintained with constant practice. Heart, lungs, muscles; all have to be kept in perfect tone. If I am going to continue to be billed in the Ringling program as 'Queen of aerial gymnasts, who will amaze you with her wonderful midair feats of strength and endurance,' I must keep constantly at my work. I may as well be turning my labors to account, so as soon as the circus goes into its winter quarters I sail for Europe for a series of engagements, my only vacations are the short trips over and back."

Codona commissioned a marble statue of himself and Leitzel and placed it in the Inglewood Park Cemetery in Englewood, California. A funeral service was held in Mottell's Chapel in Long Beach at noon on December 10, 1931. The entombment and unveiling of the monument took place at 2:00. the same day.

The December 1931-January 1932 *White Tops* reported on the monument unveiling: "With several hundred circus folk, vaudeville artists, movie personalities, members of the Circus Fans Association, other friends and relatives, the ashes of Lillian Leitzel, famous circus aerialist, were sealed by Alfredo Codona, her husband, inside a crypt in the base of the statue 'Reunion' symbolic of their affection December 10, at Inglewood Park Cemetery, Ingle-

wood, California.

"Preceding the interment at the monument funeral services were conducted at the Mottell mortuary in Long Beach, the Codona home town where the famous pair were to spend their vacations and where they had planned to live when they retired.

"Leonard A. Gross, CFA of the Minnesota Top, who is spending the winter in Los Angeles, represented the CFA at the services in Long Beach. While in Inglewood Park cemetery J. A. Westmoreland, CFA of Los Angeles, represented the CFA, appointed by President Hertzberg, at the unveiling of the statue and interment of the ashes. Rector Paul Austin of St. Lukes Episcopal Church in Long Beach officiated at both services. He told those assembled that it was the pairs last 'act' together 'under God's big top' that it was but the earth taking back its own and that in imperishable marble witness is borne of love's eternity.

"The monument is a work of art, writes J. A. Westmoreland, and very symbolic of the great love between these two people. The white Carrara marble shone brightly in the sun as the hundreds gathered around to see the sealing of the crypt in which the silver urn containing the ashes of Leitzel were placed by Alfredo. The statue in life size shows a life like figure of Leitzel caught in the arms of the winged figure representing Alfredo, clinging to him in safety. The work is splendid in every respect. In an arc niche below the figures is shown two Roman rings hanging on ropes one of which is broken, mindful of the sad accident in Copenhagen, Denmark, last February when the little queen of aerialists fell to her death while working high on the rings. Alfredo was doing his act in Berlin. Below this at the top of the base are bronze plaques which were placed there by various members of the family, among which space has been left for a similar one to be prepared by the Circus Fans Association as outlined at the annual meeting in Boston last June when President Hertzberg appointed Vice-President Delvaille



Leitzel on her Roman rings around 1930.

H. Theard as chairman of the committee.

"The statue was flanked by gorgeous flowers, among which were those of the National CFA association, from various State Tops, Tents and individual members who knew and loved the little circus star. One large piece, depicted in flowers, Leitzel hanging to the rings with the cord of one breaking.

"Among those who attended, noted from the circus profession, were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Silbon, Thomas and Everett Hart, Ray Marlowe and Karl Krapf, who were with the Codonas on the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey circus; 'Sky' Clark, Mr. and Mrs. 'Buck' Reager Minnie Fisher, Louise Lea, Olga Celeste, Harry Tozer and Russell Ewing. Mabel Clemings Gould, so long with Leitzel as maid, was present with the Codona family.

"The sincerity of Alfredo in his love for Leitzel in their happy days together and in his actions and the loving care and thought he has shown in these past ten months is consummated in no small way in this beautiful last tribute that he has paid her. His tears of unfeigned sorrow at the services behold his heart."

Codona was devastated and yet he moved on and within two years he married Vera Bruce who was in his flying act.

Steve Gossard and the Circus World Museum library contributed to this article.

# Random Recollections

By Lillian Leitzel

*These remarks were told to Paul Brown in the fall of 1930. The article is from the files of the Circus World Museum.*

Traveling with a circus for even a single season is certain to yield a great many amusing and exceptionally unusual circumstances. To have done so as I have ever since childhood—really from infancy, if those early years can be counted—has provided a broken chain of amusing highlights which serve as a great comfort in times of dejection. To recall them is certain to banish melancholia.

Even when I was so dreadfully ill last year in Paris there was an element of humor in the situation which saved it from stark depression. I had double pneumonia. While I was still convalescent I got tonsillitis on both sides of the throat; before the tonsils could be removed I developed mastoiditis on both sides of my head. Both kidneys became terribly inflamed and painful because of the burden imposed upon them by my other various illnesses.

Naturally, the press carried the story of my condition. It was printed in America and I got hundreds of cables from my friends who seemed to regard my condition as a source of amusement, for all the messages were jovially similar. One in particular, which I have never forgotten, epitomizes them all. "You do things so thoroughly. No wonder you have double everything. Now let's see you get appendicitis on both sides."

Who could be melancholy with fiends like that?

No one ever seems to take me very seriously, somehow or other. Several years ago a man who had been on the same show with me who had been away for some time and circus told me of his difficulties,

Largely to make it possible for him to travel with the circus I offered him a job as my chauffeur. He took it and was most excellent. He did have one fault, however; he would gamble at times with the canvasmen at their

crap games.

Gambling, even that innocuous kind, is strictly forbidden by the circus management. Employees caught at it are likely to be dismissed, particularly if they have ever been warned before. I told my chauffeur that he would have to stop it; that the rules governing circus employees applied also to him. He agreed, and for a while there was nothing to indicate that he had not really stopped.

Then, one night, when he came to drive me from my dressing tent to the cars, I seemed to know instinctively that he had been shooting craps again. With a manner and in a voice that I intended to be scathingly sarcastic and biting, I said to him: "I suppose you have been shooting craps and have lost all your money again." It was intended to be the preamble of a severe scolding. He turned to me beamingly, his face fairly alight.

"No," he said, delightedly. "I won thirty dollars." Thrusting a little roll of dirty bills into my hand, he added: "Keep it for me, will you please."

An illustration from the 1926 Ringling-Barnum press book.

## MEET "GRANNY" LEITZEL 84 AND STILL TROUPING



GRANDMA LEITZEL WITH LILLIAN THE THIRD

What else could I do in the face of such trust?

One of the most memorable situations I ever encountered was created because of its sustained ludicrousness; we were showing in the Southwest and were invited to spend Sunday at the home of a Southern gentleman of the old school who was really just that.

However, he had fifty-five close relatives, as they consider such things in the South, and we did not know that it was the regular practice of the old gentleman to assemble these relatives every Sunday to meet such guests as he may have provided. The relatives, without exception, were provincial in the extreme and some of them were not exactly genteel.

When we arrived we were confronted with this mass of people standing on the great verandah behind our host. As we alighted from the motors, he introduced us much this way: "Cousins, this is Mr. Alfredo Codona; he goes on a trapeze! This is Miss Anna Hutchinson; she rides a horse; this is Mr. Carl Wallenda; he walks on a wire this is Mr. Frederick Bradna; he blows a whistle, this is Miss Charlotte Shive; she hangs by her teeth," and so on indefinitely. For us it was most entertaining. None of us ever thought of the immaculate and cosmopolitan ringmaster as the man, who blew a whistle before.

Somehow or other I managed to escape the general introductions. It was an error, for it instantly made me a subject of special interest, I managed to drift into the large living room of the house and was sitting unobtrusively in the corner of the room, watching the local customs with interest; but I wasn't to get away, I saw my host approaching.

"Pardon, Miss Leitzel," he began, "but my cousins are anxious to know what you do in the circus."

Alfredo Codona, my husband, sitting beside me, started to squirm. I dreaded what was come, for his sense of humor is keen. Fortunately, it is

always kindly. Still appreciating the unique introductions, he courteously informed the old gentleman, "She climbs a rope."

There was a time in my life when I thought I would go mad if I ever heard that sentence again. It was seized upon as a mouse would be at a convention of cats and passed about that room as if it were the most magnificent information the world had yet obtained.

One dear old lace frilled, black-gown lady would lean toward another and whisper, "She climbs a rope." It would be passed, as a startling revelation, to another, "She climbs a rope." With eyes wide with incredulity those numerous cousins actually tasted and savored that statement, it looked as though the idea of a woman climbing a rope was preposterously unique it resounded deafeningly, even when almost whispered, "She climbs a rope?"

Just as the tension it was creating approached the ultimate a dear, sweetly smiling old soul who looks like I wish my grand mother looked came to me and asked—I knew she would before she spoke—because she was a late arrival, "And my dear, what do you do?"

Again my irrepressible husband functioned.

"She climbs a rope," he said, but he said it silently, so that ordinarily not a vestige of information would have been imparted.

But the lovely old lady, who should never have been teased, had been deaf for years and could read his lips as easily as I can a newspaper. She amazed me by turning to me and saying, delightedly, "Ah. so you climb a rope."

It was too much. Dumbly acquiescing as graciously as possible, I led to the grateful quietness of the garden where I found some children already playing circus. The first stunt they had embarked upon was the result of the first suggestion they had received which had been sufficiently emphatic.

Yes, you are right; they were climbing a rope.

However, there are some compensations in that incident. One of the things I must do to reach my flying rings is climb a rope. I really roll up, rather than climb but the distinction is a professional one. If I ever become



A Strobridge two sheet litho used in 1926. Cincinnati Art Museum.

vain about it I have only to recall an interview with a newspaperwoman in one of the Eastern states. The woman who wanted to interview me for her paper approached Tom Killtilea, our publicity man. He gave her all the information about me which he that might, form a general background and make her work relatively easy—he then brought her to the back yard to meet me.

We had a very pleasant little talk but she seemed more interested in watching the strange things passing my dressing tent than she was in getting an interview. At last, however, something seemed to arouse her interest mightily. She turned to me with elation,

"To be sure," she ejaculated. "I remember all about you now. You ride a horse, don't you?"

Another little incident calculated to remove conceit, which I might have possessed, occurred at a time and place when it was least to be anticipated. Alfredo and I were guests at a convention of circus enthusiasts in the mid-west and a number of pictures were being taken for newspaper illustrations of the convention.

The master of ceremonies, who prided himself on knowing everyone prominent in circus life, had the various celebrities pose for their pic-

tures. I was not included.

Then after that, he began to take a series of pretty girl pictures. He had practically everybody in the place photographed before he was through, except himself and me.

He finally turned to me with an indulgent smile, placed his hand on my head, and asked: "And would this pretty little circus girl like to have her picture taken too?"

I had been starring in the biggest show on earth at that time for more years than I like to remember. Before I could demurely decline his invitation the place was in an uproar of hilarity everybody but the master of ceremonies himself had been aware of the situation for some time.

I learned later that someone—as a practical joke had erased the first name from the top of the list which the bandmaster had been given, which happened to have been my own. It not only explained the omission but furnished some comfort for my lacerated pride. Still, I shouldn't remember the incident too severely. Didn't he call me pretty?

There seem to be a number of women in America who think that certain distinguishing attributes attach to them when they represent themselves to be Miss Lillian Leitzel; I have never been able to understand what they might be, but from my knowledge of past incidents I judge that there must have been a thousand or more such impersonators from time to time. Some of those women must have been willing to do anything that occurred to them, or which might have been suggested.

Evidently, their dupes would remain dupes until and unless they happened to meet me. Some of them did, and not all the situations thus created were funny, by any means.

On one occasion I began to get wires from a train, approaching the city where we were showing, at hundred mile intervals which were really lovely. They contained the most charming sentiments, reflected a happy past, and were excellent messages to receive in every way—except that they were signed "Hubby."

Alfredo has been with me more or less constantly ever since we were married. I feared that some man who had been badly deceived was due for disillusionments. It developed into

just that and whoever the woman is who impersonated me on that occasion, she must have been a remarkably charming and gracious one. The poor chap was incredibly hurt.

Leitzel outside her dressing tent in 1930.

My mail is ever likely to contain letters from erstwhile sweethearts, telling me of the plans we have made for the future—neither plans nor sweethearts being previously known to me. Many of them are amusing, but most of them make me wish that I could locate and punish the woman guilty of the impersonation.

We were showing at the Garden, in New York, recently. While my husband and I were dressing for our acts there suddenly came, without warning, a furious pounding on the door of the dressing room.

Alfredo and I looked at each other, startled. A bull like voice roared, out in the corridor, "Come on, Lillian; open the door. Here I am."

Alfredo grinned. He understands those situations, perfectly.

"Let me see the gentleman, dear," he suggested.

Opening the door slightly, he stepped into the hall,

"Hello" the voice boomed. "Where's my wife, Lillian Leitzel?"

"When did you marry her?" asked Alfredo, curiously.

"What do you care?" came the retort. "Go tell her that Banana Red wants her and wants her quick."

"All right. Come along," agreed Alfredo. When he got the estimable Banana Red—considerably dazed by alcohol—at the outside door he gave him a dollar and started him on his way, completely forgetful that he ever had a wife.

On another occasion a man in Philadelphia applied at the main entrance for permission to see me. He not only stated that he knew me well, but he intimated, with smirks and knowing looks that he knew me



very well! Indeed, one of the show's private policemen was sent back with him—if the man behaved after he arrived like he indicated he had in the past his visit was going to be a short one.

As it happened, I was not in my tent when he and his escort arrived but my maid, Mabel, was bending over a small collapsible wash tub, rinsing out a pair of spangled leotards. As the man approached, she looked up. He rushed up to her, shook her hand, suds and all, and fairly shouted, "My dear Lillian, how glad I am to see you again."

I knew nothing of the incident until I presently returned, for the man was advised to leave promptly, I never could imagine what he anticipated but there is no reasonable way of estimating the mental processes of people like that.

Leitzel and her uncle Bluch Landolf.

In New Orleans I was informed that a man insisted on seeing me and that he stoutly affirmed that he not only knew me but that I knew him—had seen him often. His name meant nothing to me, but I considered that I might easily have forgotten it; I am expected to remember so many.

Finally he came back, I didn't recognize him but he positively beamed upon me while he assured me that for the past six shows we gave, he was the man who applauded me who was sitting on the right of the entrance!

Well, as long as there was one on the left, too, I suppose I should not complain.

Incidentally, that incident is not so

ridiculous as it may seem. It is frequent that one person—often, a child who seems tremendously appreciative of what I am doing, will be the only person in a tent filled with twenty thousand people who really has my attention. Manifestly, it is impossible to play to them all and the logical person to work for is one who probably appreciates what I am doing.

The contrary of that situation is also unfortunately true. If, as sometimes happens, a baleful, sour-looking person—of course, it's always a man—happens to fix my attention I feel that I cannot do nearly as well. I seem unable to rid myself of the impression that that one man is the embodiment of the entire throng, just daring me, "Go ahead, but you gotta be good."

I always accept the challenge and do the best I can but I think that it would be a much better performance if I could get rid of the obsession that the crowd is hostile despite the paradoxical fact that I know it isn't, at all.

Not so very long ago we had a new woman attached as a female porter to one of the women's sleeping cars,

She is a negress from the South and had been in the North but a very short time. There were frequent evidences of her rusticity which were most entertaining,

One night, after the show, when the train was being shifted about, preparatory to getting under way it happened that the two dog wagons, filled with over a hundred barking animals, were placed on the track next to the sleeping cars and left there for

nearly an hour.

When I reached the train the negress greeted me with amazed delight, "Great day in the mawning. Dis sure lose is a fine job I'se got me now. All the people in town get up early to see us git here and all the dogs in town come down to see us off."

Some amusing recollections center about things which happened on the



lot. I will never forget the discipline meted out to a few hard boiled laborers who insisted upon the constant use of profane language after repeated warnings to stop it. Our boss canvassman gathered them up, pointed to a very heavy piece of apparatus laying on the ground which was usually moved by three times as many men as he had, and told them: "Carry that over there." "Over there" was but a short distance, about ten feet, but it crossed the road from the animal top to the entrance to the big top, which was constantly filled with the elephants, camels, zebras and other beasts used in the various spectacles. It took considerable time to cross.

Realizing what was being done to them the profane ones struggled valiantly to carry their load and eventually reached the other side of the narrow, thronged passageway. Just as they were about to thankfully drop it in its new location the boss canvassman purred grimly: "Now young gentlemen, you might bring it back again."

The swearing stopped completely thereafter, and being called "young gentlemen" for the first time within their knowledge took away the rancor of the situation.

We generally have a few men employed as either canvasmen or laborers who must be taught the ways of the circus by means that are not always gentle. Of course they are not brutal, nor are they resorted to until everything else has failed.

There was a gang of Negro laborers whose routine jobs necessitated their working outside my dressing tent for a short time each day, one of them accidentally upset my dressing table when he bumped into the aide wall of the tent. It was entirely unintentional, I am sure and I said nothing about it, even to the laborer.

But the following day it happened again, I explained to that Negro laborer as courteously as though I were talking to the owner of the show the necessity for a little caution. Two days later I entered my dressing tent to find the table upset again. I felt that it had been done purposely that time and I told that black boy a number of things no lady should even know, much less say.

The following day I was working at the table when it was forcibly



Leitzel with her brother and mother in 1926.

bumped again and would have fallen but for my presence. Without a word I grabbed a heavy wire metal backed hair brush, dashed out of the tent and started for the Negro. He began to run when he saw me coming, but fell over the tent guys. While he was prone on the ground I gave him a spanking that his mammy should have given him a good many years before. The roars that emanated from him put the lions to shame. When I walked away I was tired from wielding that brush, but he must have been rather more than tired.

Sometime later, when they were again working outside my tent I heard them discussing me, evidently unaware that I could hear. It became apparent that they did not know me nor what I did in the show. We had an animal act then in which tigers were featured by a woman trainer and one of the gang suggested, tentatively, "I reckon she must be the tiger woman."

"Huh" snorted the Negro I had spanked, "no tiger woman. She's the tigers' Old Woman."

It's a most disrespectful term, but all those men knew that Old Woman meant mother.

Alfredo and I go to many affairs together, of course, just as all husbands and wives do-or-should. I recall vividly when my own absent-mindedness created a situation, which was not exactly delightful. It was at a dinner in New York, which was given for and attended by a number of nationally prominent

actors and entertainers from the stage and screen.

Texas Guinan was sitting beside Alfredo, who was sitting beside me. On my other side was an old friend, an aerialist with whom I had been talking shop briefly. Miss Guinan leaned across Alfredo, with whom she had been talking laughingly, to ask, "Lillian, just what does your husband do?"

Preoccupied, with my mind attuned to the conversation I had been having with another aerialist, I answered briefly and casually, "He is a leaper."

It was too much for Tex. She whoopingly told all and sundry that Alfredo was a leaper—and it was useless for me to even attempt to explain that a leaper is that member of an aerial troupe who flies through the air from a trapeze to the arms of a man on another swinging trapeze waiting to catch him--called appropriately enough, the catcher.

However, it didn't make any difference. Alfredo is a Leaper—the best in the world. I have seen tremendous crowds in the indoor arenas of Paris and Berlin go almost wild when he was working and actually carry him away on their shoulders! He is the only man who has even included the frequently fatal triple somersault as a regular part of his act and is one of the very few people who can do it at all. One can easily be proud of a leaper like that.

Fortunately, Alfredo didn't mind a bit. He never does when he is the butt of a joke or the source of amusement. Not long ago he discovered during the first part of his act that his apparatus had been tampered with. His trapeze was a foot closer to his brother Lalo's than it should have been. A fatality was averted only because they both are wonderful aerialists, for they crashed together before either of them expected to do so!

He discovered that a new canvasman with the show had unintentionally made the change when he had lowered the rigging to make some minor adjustments to the guy lines. I was furious, but Alfredo regarded the incident amusingly.

But when I am the cause of mirth and he suspects that it is distasteful to me or when I am deliberately

offended he becomes dangerous. His suavity, his polished politeness, his urbanity increase appreciably and therein lies the danger, for he is disarmingly attractive. He is Spanish—perhaps that may explain it.

We were guests given at a dinner in San Francisco where everyone was most congenial except one woman who manifestly was out of place. Indeed my hostess was so conscious of it that she explained to me that her presence was inescapable, that she was not really welcome but that conditions made it imperative that she be invited. The woman was positively catty. She would say the most offensive and disagreeable things to everyone without the slightest provocation, possibly for the purpose of displaying what she honed might be regarded as superiority.

After dinner we were all chatting idly in the living room. I was telling of something which had happened in London when the exact word I wanted to illustrate a nice shading of my thoughts escaped me for the moment. I could think of the word in German, in Spanish, in French; but not in English. While I was palpably groping for it the woman interjected, with the sneering and condescending graciousness, which ought to be a legal excuse for mayhem: "Never mind, my dear. It has been evident for some time that you have found English difficult."

I did find English difficult, but know that it is not evident in my speech. Just then the word was remembered and as I continued my unimportant story I intercepted several looks of sympathy and my hostess looked at me appealingly. I decided to ignore the incident, but not so with Alfredo. I saw, watching him, the danger signals becoming manifest, but I was powerless. I began to have a feeling as if a jungle cat were watching, waiting to spring.

At last my husband's opportunity arrived. The woman was telling, with many pseudo apologetic twitterings, of the romantic conditions surrounding the loss of a glove when she was a girl. It seemed that the glove had been lost in the dark reaches of a shrubbery planted border when she had fled to escape the rain at a lawn party.

"And then," she continued, with

coy boastfulness, "imagine my delight when my charming escort insisted upon going to search for it; a black lady's glove at night in a rain storm."

Triumphantly she leaned back and beamed at us.

"Really," purred Alfredo, incredulously, "a black lady's glove."

She nodded with positive affirmation.

"And you say it was your glove?" asked my irrepressible spouse with casual insistence.

"Of course," answered the catty one, manifestly delighted that it should seem so important.

Our host hurriedly offered Alfredo a cigar, we all talked at once of many different things. Alfredo strolled happily into the library with our host to smoke, flashing a boyish grin at me as he went.

I don't know yet whether anyone ever told that woman of the very considerable difference between a black lady's glove and a lady's black glove—but everyone else at the party knew.

A husband like that is such a comfort.

Being, in a way, the hostess of the show entails a lot of peculiar responsibilities. Those people, who for reasons which seem sufficiently important to the management, are given a trip through the back yard are generally entertained in my dressing tent. I have found them charming guests

Leitzel and clowns in 1927. Circus World Museum collection.



and have tried to be an equally attractive hostess. Many of them have later become my very good personal friends, but some of them have not.

One of my really important functions is to keep tactless people from associating too intimately with the performers, many of whom are foreigners and consequently unable to accurately estimate the American idiom. They are, incidentally, educated and intelligent people, but with a peculiar acute sensitiveness which is difficult to understand without long association with them.

In Boston a very prominent woman was brought into the back yard. She sat and chatted with me while I dressed for my act, and was really delightful. She wanted to be escorted on a trip through the women's dressing tent, and there was no apparent reason why she should not have gone. Just as I was about to enter the big top she said to me, "Oh Miss Leitzel how glad I am that I had my twins several months ago, before I saw all these perfectly terrible people."

Some of those "perfectly terrible people" she would have met—she didn't incidentally—are the debutante daughter of a millionaire who left society for the life of the circus; the wife of a man who was at one time his country's diplomatic representative in Washington; a Russian princess who is riding in an act on the show because her knowledge of horses was the only thing she had to sell after the Russian debacle; the charming, cosmopolitan wife of a senior officer in the French Army; several college women, one of whom has made a real estate business on the West Coast yield her, a fortune of several hundred thousand dollars during the winter months; and a woman whose ability to write has already made her prominent and will, sooner or later, make her famous.

The circus is truly a cross section of life. The performers who entertain you so enthrallingly in the big top with their thrilling and often dangerous acts are as charming as they are interesting and are just about as far from being terrible people as they can possibly be.

# Charles W. Fish

By John Daniel Draper

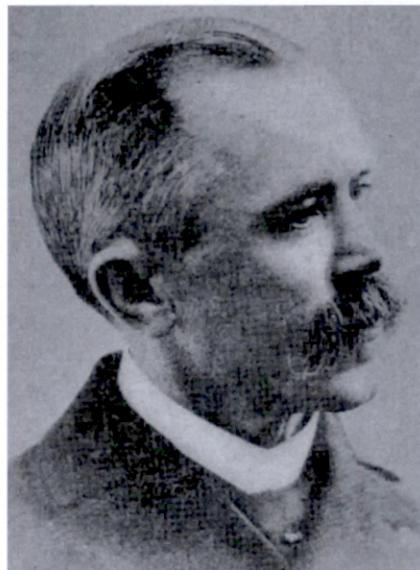
In the annals of the American circus some standing riders became famous because of the intricate tricks and spectacular maneuvers they could perform. Others were noted for the polished style with which they performed, at times even the most basic feats.

Charles W. Fish was definitely in the first category. He became a great trick rider but he was somewhat short on style. "At his best, he was a great trick rider and he was a good fellow, but he hadn't the face or the manner or the shape." John A. Dingess, in his circus history, goes further by saying, "His diminutive size and general appearance were greatly against him. His self esteem and egotism overbalanced his artistic ability.

"Fish once challenged James Melville to a bareback trial of skill for \$1000 a side. Mr. Melville's reply was that he considered Fish beneath his rank in the profession, but offered to match his son, Frank, 15 years of age, against him for the amount specified, when egotism, like a cascade, fell to its lowest depths."<sup>1</sup>

It has often been pointed out that the ideal somersault rider should be flat footed. As such a rider descends to the bareback horse from a somersault, he in effect floats down gracefully as a feather. In landing, his weight is distributed over a greater area than for a rider with a higher instep. Fish's weight, with his high instep, was concentrated on a smaller area and therefore created greater localized pressure on the horse's back. The result was a shying of the horse, sometimes almost imperceptible, but sufficient to throw off the rider's timing, affect his sense of balance and prevent a smoother and more graceful performance.

Nevertheless, Fish's high instep and his lack of grace



Charles W. Fish, November 23, 1848 to May 5, 1895. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

and beauty in physique and poise in no way interfered with his daring and exciting exploits. For instance, he was superior to James Robinson in performing pirouettes while riding bareback, although Robinson

Charles Fish featured on P. T. Barnum in 1876. Hertzberg collection.



was more handsome and graceful. Beginning with a forward somersault through a balloon while facing backwards on a horse, he could completely turn through 180 degrees and land facing forward. In some other aspects of bareback riding Robinson held a very slight edge because of his apparently superior sense of balance. Fish's finest riding was done as he turned backward and forward somersaults and twisters over banners. He also did the running jump-up to the horse's back, landing squarely on his feet.

As described in advertising for Cooper, Bailey & Co. in 1880, his specialties were not confined to one act alone. His almost incomprehensible bareback somersault and trick riding was, probably, the most difficult; his classic impersonation of the Derby jockey and picturesque statue characters, on a trotting horse, the most novel and his wonderful skill in riding and controlling nine horses at one time the most sensational.

In an interview in 1891 for the *New York Dramatic News*, Fish said: "I have on several occasions done 18 somersaults through balloons in 3 parts of the ring without stopping. I can name but one trick not done by more than one rider; that is a somersault alighting on one foot. This trick is done by me, and I was the first and, as far as I know, the only one that ever did it."

However, at the Cirque Medrano in Paris, as Fish performed his phenomenal somersaults on the horse's back, the Europeans hissed him off. They preferred adagio poses and "dainty" pirouettes to his vigorous athletic stunts, the most remarkable to be seen anywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Fish was not born into a circus family nor was he

adopted by one. In 1856 as a lad of 8 years, after attending a circus, he decided that he wanted to be a rider. Let's allow him to tell the story himself in an interview for the Chicago *Herald* for November 18, 1883. "Well," said the little man, whose wiry frame looks much bigger when on horseback than it does in citizen's clothes, 'my family settled here in America, landing at Cape Cod in 1634, and I think I may claim to be an American. I was born in Philadelphia, and when I was but eight years old, I went to see a circus at Cincinnati. Spaulding & Rogers it was, and I saw a boy riding there, John Berry by name. I suppose that boy's performance wasn't worth a row of pins, but I thought different at the time, and I made up my mind I would eclipse that boy or die. My father opposed it. He wanted me to become something decent as he called it, but when I had cried for a week or two, he gave in and allowed me to go for a year as apprentice with Jim McFarland of Spaulding & Rogers. The next Spring in 1858 I was indentured to Rogers, the junior member of the firm, Charles Liberty, a lawyer of Philadelphia, making out the papers. It was April 2, a day which has proved quite eventful in my life, for on that day I became an apprentice, I was shipwrecked and I was married to my wife; so you may judge.

"After being apprenticed for six and one-half years, and going in the meantime to South America, introduced to Emperor Pedro II, and all over the West Indies, I was thought to be a thoroughbred. In the spring of 1865 I saw James Robinson ride in New Orleans, and I took a notion to imitate his pirouettes on horseback. Jim Robinson was then about twenty-eight years old. I practiced until I was able to do the trick as well as he, and then we rode for the championship of the world and \$10,000, but in reality only for the championship. It was conceded then that I could ride better than he. Since then I've played in every State of the Union, except Oregon, and in every town and city almost, and then I joined Hengler's Circus and exhibited in London, Dublin, Belfast and Glasgow. In St. Petersburg, at one of



This 1875 Montgomery Queen ad listed Charles Fish.

my representations, the Emperor Alexander I, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Oldenburg, the Prince of Leuchtenberg and Count Schwaloff, and a number of the most famous men of the country, were present. They feted me and said they had never seen anything like it, and St. Petersburg, you must remember, is the gayest city of all Europe during winter.

"In Moscow I was presented with a laurel wreath by Schamil Bey, the gallant Circassian chieftain who so long withstood the arms of the potent Czar. Then I was at Vienna, at Pesth, at Berlin. This was with the Renz combination. The Crown Prince of Germany commanded me to appear before him, and he was the first to applaud me. This was in 1873 and in the spring of 1874 I came to America and have been here ever since."

Although Fish had little formal education as a youth, it will be seen in communications that he later sent back from his travels abroad and from the route book that he compiled for the Frank A. Robbins Circus in 1888 that he was a lucid and interesting writer. It would be interesting to know how he developed this desire and skill to write well. Toward the end of his career he also gained a serious interest in painting landscapes and, in connection with his painting, by 1891 spent much of his spare time visiting art galleries in the larger cities where he was performing.

In 1862 during the latter part of his indenture to Spalding & Rogers Ocean Circus, Fish's travels as a

bareback rider took him to Brazil, Uruguay and Buenos Aires as well as to Canada. One of his colleagues on these adventures was Theodore Tourniaire. Being shipwrecked on the show during its return to the United States in 1864, he remained with that company until his indenture expired toward the end of the year. He then joined Frank Howe's Circus at Nashville, Tennessee, where for the first time he received a salary besides food, lodging and clothes. As an apprentice he had received \$40 per year.

In 1865 he briefly rejoined Spalding & Rogers on January 2nd at New Orleans. He then went with S. B. Howes European Circus for the tenting season and at Mansfield, Ohio on August 5th he was hailed as a wonderful bareback rider. He had been engaged by that show as the featured rider to succeed James Robinson. In December he appeared at the New American Theatre in Philadelphia with fellow performers—Charles Reed, J. L. Davenport, A. F. Aymar, John Glenroy, W. F. Wallett, the Queen's jester, Frank J. Howes & Madame Howes, Mrs. Charles Warner and the clown, Joe Pentland.

The following year he was a fearless and intrepid bareback rider on Mike Lipman's Colossal Circus and Trained Animal Show and also on S. B. Howes Circus. Beginning on November 11th and continuing during the winter of 1866-67 he was one of the performers on Yankee Robinson's Coliseum & Zoological Garden & Museum at State and Washington Streets in Chicago.

For the seasons of 1867 and 1868 he was with Dan Castello related shows. In 1867 it was Barnum, Van Amburgh & Castello while the following year the title was changed to Nixon, Howe & Castello. In 1868 he was featured as one of the best bareback riders in the business, a young man who in his finish did 4 backward back somersaults. Circus managers who wished to secure him for their productions were advised to address his father at once per a *New York Clipper* ad. Highly spoken of for his "good as ever performance," he did have a couple of mishaps. On January 11th he fell and hurt him-

self but the accident did not interfere with his performance. About 2 weeks later someone stole his wardrobe. Although he was featured that season as head of the bareback riders of the world, he was still referred to as "Master" Charlie.

Continuing with Dan Castello for part of 1869, Master Charles Fish would also appear that year on Thayer's Circus and on Stone & Murray as well as J. M. French's Oriental Circus & Egyptian Caravan, where he was featured in an ad for a July 23rd date at Concord, New Hampshire. As he sharpened his skills and became more famous as a rider, he could demand higher salaries. Therefore no one of the smaller circuses could now afford the expense of retaining him for an entire season. These shows each had to be satisfied with an engagement of several weeks during the summer season. This problem did not arise with the larger circuses. That year in his "at liberty" ads in the *New York Clipper*, he used the slogan, "he is a good fish to catch." In 1870 Fish was again on J. M. French's Oriental Circus, where in San Francisco in June the famous Charlie Parker clowned his act. He was the noted clown with the January mule. In the daily street parade Parker could be heard along the line of march with his famous shout, "Whoa January." At that time some of the words used in describing Fish's artistry were "equestrian par excellence, champion bareback rider of world, peerless and matchless possessor of classic elegance, alone and incomparable beyond reach of rivalry." Charles Fish had come to California under engagement to George F. Ryland.

Fish appeared with J. E. Warner & Co.'s Great Pacific (Golden State) Menagerie & Mammoth Circus (John O'Brien, prop.) as early as March of 1871. At Van Wert, Ohio in July he rode opposite Fred Barclay and Marie Elise. Joining L. B. Lent's New York Circus in November at its location on 14th Street opposite the Academy of Music, he continued with that show through at least



This Sells Bros. litho featured Fish in 1882. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

September of 1872. He was now being featured as the best ever pirouette rider as well as a super bareback somersault performer. From a P. T. Barnum herald for that year, there is also the indication that he may have appeared on that show. Also, it is possible that he was with Orrin Bros. In that year he married his childhood sweetheart and she was to accompany him on his upcoming tour of Europe. Mrs. Fish was a very attractive woman and the couple was pleasantly received as she and her husband journeyed abroad. Eventually they purchased a home in St. Albans, Vermont where they enjoyed relaxing when time permitted.

He spent most of 1873 until December 6th with Hengler's Circus in Great Britain as a champion bareback rider. Fish closed with that show at Glasgow, Scotland on December 6th when he left for St. Petersburg, Russia. Fish wrote from the Hotel Dusaix in Moscow on January 17th, 1874 stating that he opened at St. Petersburg on December 19th with G. Ciniselli at Cirque Hinne where he was recalled 5 times after his performance. Prince Kourakin kissed his forehead. He called him the "Patti of the Cirque" and presented him with a beautiful meerschaum cigar holder. After a fortnight at St. Petersburg, Fish was sent to Ciniselli's Moscow establishment where his success was great. Mr. Andrea Ciniselli was in charge of the troupe and his wife

rode a manege act very well. By now Fish preferred an American tent show to any circus in Europe. He realized that there were many fine buildings in Europe but he felt that in general there were not many good performers. Renz almost monopolized Germany. His rival was Salamonsky. Hinne and Ciniselli had Russia to themselves. Hinne owned the buildings and his brother-in-law, Ciniselli, was the proprietor of the circuses performing there. The only act that attracted Fish was one in which 4 trick horses did the same routine simultaneously in the ring. Also, 8 year old Eva, an apprentice of Mr. Manly, rode a piebald horse with pad in forward and backward jumps over objects and performed in pirouettes on a horse that ran faster than any ridden by the men. Fish remarked that if she didn't receive a bad fall or get married, she would undoubtedly become the best female rider in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Returning to the United States from Russia on the steamship *Spain* before the tenting season of 1874, he joined the Montgomery Queen Circus in California to perform the "English" or "Bounding Jockey" act. He continued on this show in 1875 where the trio, James Robinson, Charles Fish and Romeo Sebastian, appeared, all doing back and forward somersaults over objects with a skill that alone would make any one of them a strong feature. The sensational Mollie Brown was also on the program for that season. It was during this period that James Robinson and Fish held their championship riding match. Much was made of the fact that Fish had traveled over 7000 miles from Ciniselli & Rentz's Circus in Europe to compete against Robinson.<sup>4</sup> At that time it was pointed out that Charlie Fish, with an injured arm, rode with the grace of a thorough gentleman, not that of a "common" circus man.

During the season of 1876, until September of that year, he was on the John H. Murray Circus. At St. Johns, N. B., on July 20th, after turning a somersault, he slipped

from his horse and, before reaching the ground, struck the ring rope. He was so badly injured that he had to be assisted from the ring. Later closing with John H. Murray, he joined the P. T. Barnum Circus for the remainder of the season.

After opening in Philadelphia on the International Circus in 1877, in March he again joined P. T. Barnum for the balance of the season. In a newspaper article at Fond Du Lac on July 7, 1877, Barnum noted: "A like sum of \$50,000 will be paid as a yearly salary to as fine a bareback rider as Mr. Charles W. Fish, who is, moreover, but one distinguished artist in a circus of world wide celebrities."

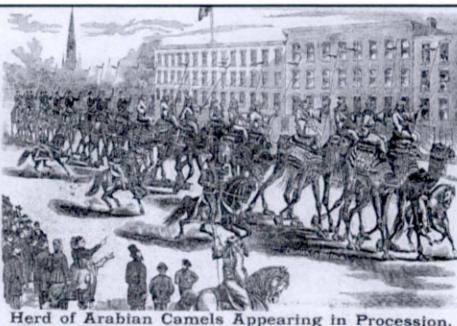
In March of 1878, returning with Frank A. Gardner from a date with Orrin Bros. Circus, Fish rejoined the P. T. Barnum show. That year he was doing double front and back somersaults on horseback without a single miss. The \$50,000 challenge was still regularly appearing in newspaper ads in Ohio. On the same program were Charles Reed, the dancing horseman, and Carl Antony with his 20 trained stallions from France, Germany, Russia and Italy. Other riders were James Cooke and Jennie Watson in a double equestrian act, Katie Stokes with her bareback riding and Wm. Morgan, the lightning hurdle rider. At the end of November Fish with his wife and the Lee Family of seven left for Havana to again join Orrin Bros.

For the next two seasons, 1879 and 1880, Charles Fish rode his principal bareback and bounding jockey acts on Cooper & Bailey & Co.'s Great London Circus. In the first of these years Peter Conklin clowned his acts and in the latter, Whimsical Walker.

In his astonishing riding, he displayed more skill, intrepidity and dash than ever before witnessed in the ring.

In the 1881 season Fish joined Robbins & Colvin's Great American & German Allied Shows where he served as equestrian director as well as bareback rider.

He led the street parade driving three horses tandem hitched to his newly imported English dog cart. He was followed by 25 cages, 10 elephants, 6 new tableau wagons and



**Herd of Arabian Camels Appearing in Procession.**  
**SECURED AT A FORTUNE'S EXPENDITURE**  
**A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE PUBLIC.**  
**The Hero Horseman of the Universe,**  
**MR. CHARLES FISH**  
POSSIBLY RIDES AT STREET ENTERTAINMENT of our FRIENDLY and PEACEFUL EXHIBITION.  
**HIS EVER STANDING CHALLENGE**  
To Any Horseman, In Any Country, and  
**FOR ANY SUM NOT LESS THAN FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS**  
Boots and over all mount unspotted. His present durability will exceed hospitality is already beyond all previous. He strictly allows  
**WITHOUT PEER OR PROTOTYPE**  
Every animal of this match has done like hounds, and longer no pretensions have existed in his price. No country has produced like equal with us  
**NO VAIN PRETENTIOUS RIVALRY**  
One and only one can be equal to him. His present durability will exceed hospitality is already beyond all previous. He strictly allows  
**DO NOT FORGET HIS HOURS FOR RIDING."**

A page from an 1882 Sells Bros. courier featuring Charles Fish.

an orchestra musical chariot together with three open dens of hyenas, lions & tigers, etc. Other highlights on the show that year were Herr Neygaard's troupe of trained horses and Mme. Martha's leaping and fire stallions.<sup>5</sup>

Charles Fish was a man of much compassion as is evidenced by a letter he wrote to the *New York Clipper* for the December 24th issue of 1881. "I am just informed by letter from Havana of the death of my groom, James Beals. No particulars have reached me and I am as much surprised as grieved at hearing it. He has been in my employ a little more than 5 years. I looked upon him more as a friend than as an employee. A tribute to his memory worthy of one so faithful and true a man in every particular cannot be too strongly worded. Had I the power or gift which place characters and virtues on pages that never perish, I could not do more than say, he was a true man, such as seldom crosses one's path. Although in a humble walk of life, he was a pattern that others, in more ostentatious positions, might copy and profit by. I can ask for no greater favor than that God may give me another as true a friend as James Beals was. I believe his home was in Syracuse, N. Y. and that he has relatives living

there. His relatives can obtain whatever information I can give them by addressing me at Lockbox 50, St. Albans, Vermont."<sup>6</sup>

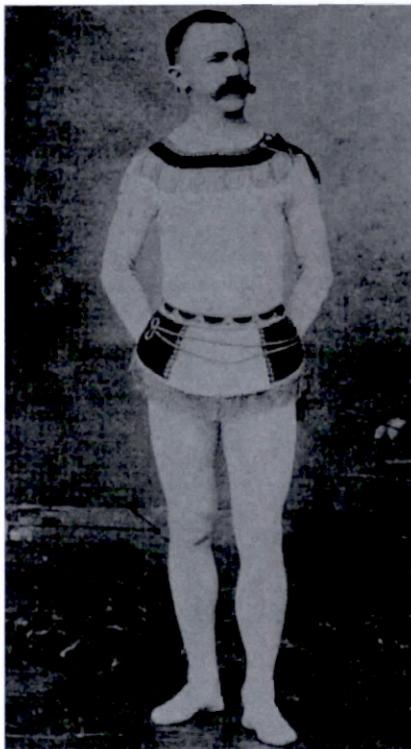
At the close of the regular Robbins & Colvin's season, he again went to Havana, this time appearing with Dockrill & Leon's Circus at the Iron Amphitheater. He was billed there from January through March 1882. Engaged on Sells Bros. for the remainder of that year, at Hays City, Kansas he was featured as the "Hero Horseman of the Universe" and he rode his horse as if it were impossible for him to fall off as he turned somersaults with ease through paper balloons.

After a year on Orrin Bros. in 1883, Fish wrote from the City of Mexico in February and March of 1884 about his experiences in Mexico. He pointed out that there was no actual harbor at Vera Cruz and if a norther were blowing on the day of the arrival of a ship, no attempt would be made to land the passengers or freight. Storms could range from 12 hours to 2 or 3 days. Small boats came in from the steamer to the city. The main streets had electric lights. The official palace was in the Plaza and was 2 stories high with a gallery forming a covered walk downstairs and a lounging place upstairs. In the upper gallery a good size band played for 2 or 3 hours at a time. Lottery tickets were sold with prizes ranging from \$600 daily to \$100,000 annually. Fish was sent to Puebla, first, with 2 performances daily, the afternoon one in a bullring and the night one at 8:30 in the principal theatre. The company included Kate Ormond, principal rider, Fred Barclay, Indian & jockey rider, and Ned Orrin, trick horse. The mountain scenery from Vera Cruz to Pueblo was beautiful and great engineering skill was evidenced in the building of the railroad. Double header engines were required on the heavy grades to pull the 5 moderate size cars, one of which contained an armed body of soldiers. At the summit was a higher level table land. Puebla was a city of 50,000 with no gas or electric lights. The only illumination was by oil lamps. The streets were very clean and there were 80 churches. The atmosphere was clear

and cool. There were no chimneys except in the kitchens. With no other heating, people had to go to bed to keep warm.

In Mexico City the 40 foot wide streets were poorly paved and had uneven sidewalks. There was no legal right of way on the sidewalks. Pedestrians passed to the right or the left of you or almost over you. Three men sauntering along side by side, blocking the way, would stop to converse in the center of the walkway. There was the contemptible habit of men staring at ladies. These stares conveyed an insult. In hotel rooms, lamps and candles were used instead of gas and men did the chamber work. Cleanliness was not one of their virtues. One towel was used until it was very dirty and the only way to give attention to this fact was to offer a tip quite often. Meals at restaurants were about 62 cents. Theatres were very plain with no carpets or draperies. There were wooden benches with stiff wooden backs and well worn leather cushions. Stage furniture was made by carpenters and was upholstered by the painters. In a local newspaper dated February 15th it was reported that Fish received the greatest ovation ever given for any artist in Mexico. In every respect, outside of the disagreeable subjects that he mentioned, he was very pleased with Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

Returning to the United States, by early May of 1884 Charles Fish was riding as a principal bareback rider on Burr Robbins Circus. For the first month of 1885 he operated his Charles W. Fish Champion Circus at the People's Theater in Cincinnati, later at a location in Cleveland and finally in a 41 foot ring at White's Theater in Detroit. It featured the riding of Fish and John Saunders' trained animals as well as Lottie Aymar, the Langtry of the Arena. She presented her clever act of balancing on a swinging trapeze and her original pirouette act on a trotting horse, assisted by the great clown, John Fisher. The admission price was 10 cents. For the balance of that season Fish was the featured somersault bareback equestrian on Frank A. Robbins Circus. In August while the Show was appearing in Babylon, New York, he suffered an injury to



Charles W. Fish in his riding costume.

his back while riding his act.

The year 1886 was spent in Europe. On February 26th he wrote from England: "Yesterday an event took place of great interest to the equestrian world. Queen Victoria, for the first time since 1859, witnessed a circus performance; in fact, I am told it was the first time she has witnessed an entertainment by professionals of any kind since the death of the Prince Consort. What is still more notable is that this performance was given by command of Her majesty at Windsor Castle, a ring having been made in London and set up in the riding-school of the Castle. This is the first entertainment ever given by command at the Castle or any other place. You can readily understand how much honored the circus profession should feel, and that an incentive to elevate the standard of our profession should by rights follow. Everything passed off in good shape. It was a very ceremonious affair. Not a word was spoken. The clowns were not allowed to open their mouths. All the riders rode in on their horses, and, in leaving, they backed to the curtains, bowing slowly as they did so. No applause was

given, except by a few of the under servants. The company, by invitation of the Queen, partook of lunch in one of the smaller dining-rooms of the Castle, at 1 o'clock. The performance took place at 3. All who participated are now entitled to add the word 'royal' to their special line of business. A special train conveyed our company to and from Windsor. No performance was given at night. Today and tomorrow are the last of the London season. Hengler goes from here to Birmingham opening in Curzon Hall for a season of about seven weeks. Dublin, for the summer season, is to follow. I go from here to Madrid, Spain for the summer with the Circo Price. Since writing the above those who took part in yesterday's performance have received, by the Queen's order, the royal favor--a royal blue button--to be worn in the buttonhole of the coat-collar. This also confers the right to wear the royal coat-of-arms. This is the first time the honor has ever been conferred on circus performers, or, as we are termed here, artists. Consequently, I am somewhat proud of my blue button. I forgot to mention another mark of the Queen's favor and interest in the performance. She had ordered her carriage at four o'clock for a drive. It was ready, as you may suppose. I was riding at the time, but, so great was her interest that she dismissed her carriage and remained to the end of the programme. She afterwards ordered the horses to be brought out for her inspection."<sup>8</sup>

The circus to which Mr. Fish was referring was Hengler's. The Queen had ordered the performance to please little three year old Princess Alice, daughter of the late Duke of Albany. The audience included the Royal household and Castle servants and their friends and totaled about 300 persons.

Later, writing from Madrid on June 6th, Fish had this to say: "I have been riding here for 6 weeks at Circo Price during the summer. This is a principal resort in Madrid, seating about 3000 people. Tuesday and Friday are grand nights. All boxes are sold for the season before the opening. The other circus, Hippodrome de Verano, is well

patronized at cheaper prices."<sup>9</sup>

Four months later writing from Barcelona, Spain, Fish said this about conditions there: "Life is very pleasant I have been here (Circo Equestre Barcelona) for 3 months. All the Americans who have been here this season have made hits--so that talent and America are synonymous. Business at this establishment has been steadily increasing until now the place is crowded nearly every night. Just think of it. Here is a city of only 147,000 inhabitants that supports a circus 10 months in the year. In a semi-spirit of fun I wrote a letter to Frank A. Robbins and itemized terms and conditions that might tempt me to return and travel in America. Judge of my surprise then, at receiving a letter and contracts signed, accepting my proposition, including a private stateroom for myself and wife. Shortly after signing and returning one of the contracts to Mr. Robbins, I received a very nice offer from Adam Forepaugh. As I had already signed with Mr. Robbins I couldn't accept Mr. Forepaugh's but offered my services for his New York season commencing March 1 and my offer was immediately accepted by cablegram."<sup>10</sup>

After closing his three month engagement with the Cirque Fernando in Paris in February of 1887, Fish sailed from Le Havre for New York City to join the Adam Forepaugh Circus. This was a big show with Addie Forepaugh and his 30 elephants and the Blondin horse. At the special Forepaugh-Barnum combination for Madison Square Garden, in addition to Fish, the riders were Josie DeMott, William Showles and Orrin Hollis. Fish in splendid form, did somersaults, both backwards and forwards, accurately and boldly taken and his quick riding in the finale was easy and graceful. This was a very fitting reappearance for him after his successful continental tour. In mid-season he was on Frank A. Robbins Circus, which by July 8th had traveled as far north as Fredericton, New Brunswick.

In December, after purchasing real estate on Chester Hill, Mt. Vernon, New York, he joined the Frank A. Robbins winter circus at the



Charles Fish was featured in this 1885 Frank A. Robbins ad. Robert Sabia collection.

American Institute. There, this rider with his worldwide reputation, did somersaults with the same perfection for which he bore such high acclaim. He remained a strong attraction, his somersaults claiming much admiration through the month of January of the succeeding year. Also, Johnny Rivers and his duo of donkeys were irresistibly humorous. He continued as a principal rider during the regular season on Frank A. Robbins Circus and compiled the route book for that show for 1888. Later, on November 4th he sailed to join Santiago Pubillones in Cuba.

Still on the Gran Circo Pubillones in January of 1889, he was laid up for 6 weeks with a sprained ankle. That season this show played under a 120 foot round top. Next he joined the 4th Avenue Circus as equestrian manager.

The principal riding acts were given by Viola Rivers and Fish. There was a rotation of acts during the succeeding weeks. Other riders were Annie Carroll, W. O'Dale, bareback rider, and Wm. O'Dell, 3 horse act. He finished his date with this New York based circus on July 13th and two days later he joined Prof. Bristol's Show at Milford, Mass. At the end of September Fish cancelled his engagement with Donovan in South American to sign with Orrin

Bros. for a 41 weeks season in Mexico. He left the U. S. about November 6th. He had not appeared in Mexico for a number of years.

Fish wrote this letter from Mexico City on February 5, 1890: "We opened at Merida, Yucatan, Mexico on November 18, 1889 in a new bull ring (Plaza de Toro) and theatre, a huge building open overhead, much more nicely finished and painted than any I had previously seen outside of Spain. No such company was seen in Yucatan as that of Circo Orrin and for 6 weeks we played to uninterrupted good business, the open space of the bull ring (overhead) being covered with canvas. During our stay here a branch company was sent to Izamal for 5 days where big business rewarded us for undertaking one of the most unique as well as uncomfortable journeys I ever experienced. Nine miles were made in 'volancoches,' a vehicle with two large wheels and body resting on huge straps. There are no seats, the bottom being ropes supporting a mattress on which 2 persons can stretch at full length or 4 persons can sit crosswise, 2 on each side. The motive power is 3 little mules abreast in harness of hemp. Nine miles were made in keen run over a road consisting of boulders from the size of a bucket to a sprinkling cart. The worst storm at sea is a pleasure to the rocking and pitching of one of these 'volancoches.' From Merida, the company went to Progreso (port of entry) and played several days to the capacity of the bull ring. An experimental trip was made to Campeche, State of Campeche, the horses and half of the company disembarking at that point and the other half proceeding to Laguna, where an exhibition was given in the theatre. In both places business exceeded expectations.

"Campeche party left there on 8th, it being necessary to start at 4 AM in small sailboats, anchorage grounds of American steamer (Ward Line) being 18 miles from shore in open sea. Boarded Niagara at 9 AM. At 3 PM on our way to Vera Cruz, arriving there at noon on 9th. Opened 11th to fine business and remained until 21st. On 22nd at 2 AM left Vera Cruz by special train and arrived in

Mexico City at 3 PM. Opened evening of 24th to capacity audience of best families. Business was larger than that of any previous season to date. The company is the largest and one of best that Orrin Bros. have ever brought to Mexico. Was received nicely but not as enthusiastically as on my former visit. (He was nervous because public had been incensed against him because of remarks 6 years before that he was reputed to have made but which he had never even thought.) In a restaurant overheard remarks which I, without thinking how it would sound in the reading afterward, repeated in my letter. If I had taken a second thought I should not have mentioned it as it was none of my business. Inclined to think origin of these misrepresentations is some person unfriendly to Orrin Bros.

"Our stay in the city will extend well into the spring. Some of the people have already finished their engagements and are on their way to the States. Chiarini's Circus is on its way to this city, showing enroute. Just where it is now I do not know, certainly not over 24 hours' ride by rail from here." <sup>11</sup>

Practically all of 1890 was spent in Mexico with Orrin and also through January of 1891. Writing from Vera Cruz in January of 1891, Fish reported: "Orrins have uniformly good business at present. Part of the company is awaiting arrival of others who were playing at Laguira in the theatre. Heavy norther since yesterday has prevented other part (of show) to arrive and so opening is postponed. Frank Melville met with serious accident in the leaps on Christmas day (1890), missing the bed and lighting on the ground, badly injuring his left ankle. There were other injuries also to Crowther, skater and sword manipulator, and to George Wilton, bar performer. The Gilfort Bros. are having a glorious time,

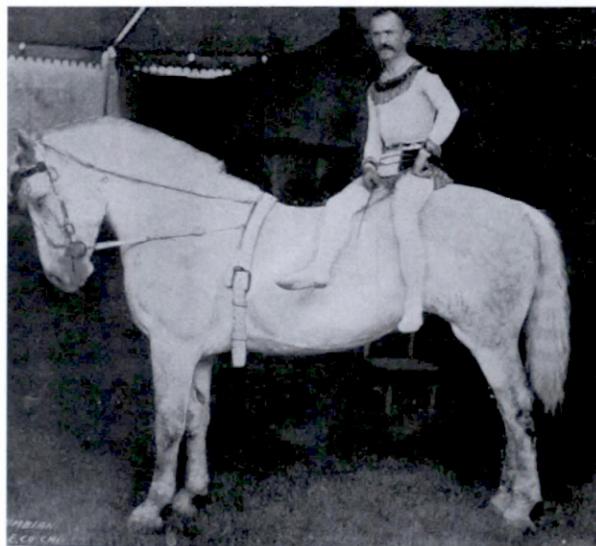


An 1891 litho of Fish on the Barnum & Bailey. Circus World Museum collection.

fishing, shooting pelicans and finding peculiar fossil remains of extinct animals and birds. All others are doing well." <sup>12</sup>

Returning to the States, Fish joined Barnum & Bailey on April 28, 1891. That year he was featured alone on a lithograph in five poses—leaping from the ground to the horse's back, the twisting somersault, leaping high hurdles at full speed, hero horseman and the whirlwind finish. By then his serious interest in landscape paintings had also become full blown. On July 11th the show's route took it to St. Albans, his former home. Later, on

Fish as pictured in the 1894 Ring Bros. Circus route book.



the 8th of August in Pittsburgh, he strained his back in his principal act, compelling him to retire from riding until the 13th. With substantial success for the season, this accomplished equestrian returned to Bridgeport at the season's end and devoted the winter months to breaking new ring stock.

In heralds and newspaper ads for 1892 he was listed as being with both Barnum & Bailey and Walter L. Main as a bareback rider, but we

also know that on June 17th at Grafton, N. D. he joined Ringling Bros. for the balance of the season. On that day a group of world famed equestrians was introduced in the middle ring with a special announcement as a most attractive feature. Fish was the champion with a remarkable bareback trick act. This was only the third year that Ringling had been on rails. On November 19th he opened with the Philadelphia Winter Circus and remained until it closed.

After visiting Barnum & Bailey on the afternoon of April 17th, 1893 to watch the performance and get some pointers from the scores of clever equestrians over there, he went back to Ringling Bros. and stayed there for that entire season. As usual, he was a heavily featured rider. On a herald for that year, he was hailed as

"an artist who has delighted the world, pre-eminently distinguished from all other riders by his noted originality, unique style, unexampled skill, daring evolutions, picturesque poises, dangerous exploits, perfect pirouettes, peerless feats and wonderful agility; by his rapid succession of dexterous somersaults; by his bird-like flights from the ground to his flying steed; by the seemingly impossible feat of turning a complete somersault, both leaving and alighting on the back of his horse on one foot; by his daily execution of his famous 'backward back' somersault, in the performance of which he starts

and alights while facing in the exact opposite direction to which his horse is running, and by his many other original, fearless, artistic and to all others impossible feats of horsemanship."

For the first part of the 1894 season, Fish joined the small Albert M. Wetter Circus which had 2 elephants, 2 camels and a 12 cage menagerie. In preparation, he had spent his spare moments working with his new horse, a beautiful dapple gray and a model of beauty. He stated that it was the finest one he had ever owned. Also on the Show were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Miller, bareback riders, who had recently arrived from New Orleans with their three horses. In preparation for the season's performances, they were rehearsing twice daily. On July 20th at Huntington, Indiana, Charlie Fish again joined Ringling Bros. Circus and in November he went to Frank Hall's Chicago Winter Circus, which was entitled the "Royal English Circus & German Water Carnival." In the 1895 early season program for that show, Fish's bareback act with the clown, Mons. J. Caban, was prominently listed. It was claimed that while he was there, he defeated Willie De Mott for a purse of \$500 offered by Manager Hall. According to the account, De Mott lost the contest by default when thrown from his horse and badly hurt as he attempted to duplicate some of Fish's daredevil tricks.

This 1893 Ringling ad lists Fish.

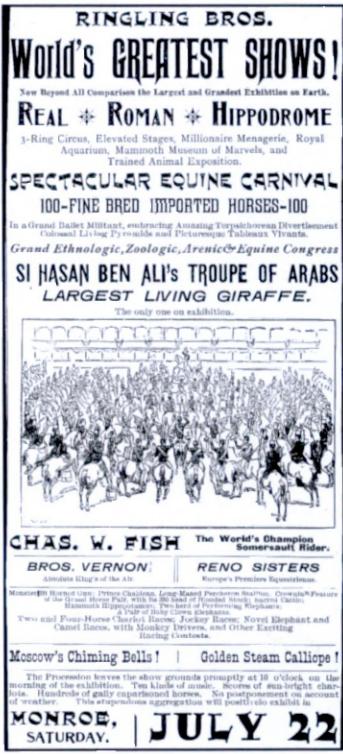
In preparation for its 1895 tour, Ringling Bros. produced a beautiful lithograph which pictured three great



This Courier Co. 1895 Ringling poster lists the three featured riders.

principal riders standing with their horses. Charles Fish was in the center with Cecil Lowande to his right and Mike Rooney to his left. Portraits of the five Ringling brothers were spaced around the frame, one at each corner and Al in the center at the top. It had been planned that Fish would make the 1895 season, his fourth tour with that circus. He was a favorite with the management. He was fond of writing and was a clever pen and ink sketch artist. Utilizing his skills, he had contributed some interesting illustrations to the Ringling Bros. route book for 1894.

However, illness now overtook him and he was forced to withdraw from the 1895 schedule. A *New York Clipper* article for May 4th under date line of Chicago reported: "One of the most pathetic things ever seen is the struggle that Charley Fish is making to keep alive. He is surrounded by friends who see that everything is done for his comfort and he had not only the professional skill but the friendly interest of Dr. Stringfield. A week ago it was thought he could not live and a less resolute man would have been dead



by this time but he hangs on and is fighting it out in a way that fills with tears the eyes of those who see the struggle. Last Saturday he had gained enough strength to be delirious and the sheet was pinned down to keep his arms from struggling. He slipped one arm out from under the cover, however, and making the same graceful salute with which he had greeted hundreds of thousands, he, in his

delirium, went through with his act, talking to his horse throughout. The Elks have appointed a committee to look after Mr. Fish and his wife during their trouble and it is a pleasure to say that he is receiving the very best of attention. He has had many close calls before but there are few men who ever recover after being as far gone as he has been for the past week. His chances are now, however, a little better than even."<sup>13</sup>

In spite of this limited optimism, amidst intense suffering from an intestinal ailment and pneumonia, Charles W. Fish died on May 5th in Chicago at the age of 47. The trouble had started with a cold that settled in his lungs. At the end his wife and a niece were at his bedside. He was a member of the B.P.O. Elks and the Knights of Pythias. He was buried in Mt. Ida Cemetery at Troy, New York.<sup>14</sup>

#### Notes

1. Dingess, John A. (1829-1901), Manuscript, p. 69, 170 (Harry Hertzberg Collection)
2. Norwood, Ed., Interview, Dallas, *Texas News*, September 25, 1927
3. *New York Clipper*, February 28, 1874, p. 383
4. *Ibid.* April 17, 1875, Supplement, p. 1
5. *Ibid.* May 7, 1881
6. *Ibid.* December 24, 1881, p. 656
7. *Ibid.* April 5, 1884, p. 44
8. *Ibid.* March 20, 1886, p. 4
9. *Ibid.* June 26, 1886, p. 232
10. *Ibid.* October 30, 1886, p. 523
11. *Ibid.* February 22, 1890, p. 829
12. *Ibid.* February 17, 1891, p. 759
13. *Ibid.* May 4, 1895, p. 131
14. *Ibid.* May 11, 1895, p. 151

# Frank A. Robbins

## A SUPPLEMENT

BY ROBERT SABIA

It never really ends, does it? And aren't we fortunate that it doesn't end because additional information on Frank A. occasionally arises that must be addressed in some fashion. As many know, recently CHSer Ken Harck purchased a rather large, and certainly very interesting, collection of circus memorabilia including a wealth of Frank A. Robbins material. He had previously shared some of the lithos with Fred Pfening so that they could illustrate our recently completed series on our hero. Also within this collection were a number of Frank A. Robbins tickets, letterheads, circus related forms, a few couriers and programs, and a number of letters that related to a gentleman named William Appleman, of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, just across the Delaware River from Easton, Pennsylvania.

It seems that our new friend William Appleman was embarking upon a career in the circus as a lithographer on the advance car. In

This great billstand was posted by the Robbins show in 1911.

this regard, he wrote to a number of the principal circuses of the day (circa 1910) for a position on the advance and he lucked out. He got a job with the very best in 1910, none other than the Frank A. Robbins All Feature Shows. He did even better than that. His new boss, the manager of FAR's Advance Car #1, was a kindly, professional gentleman named Charles Chapman, who was always seeking aggressive, honest and hard working young men to bring into his fold. William Appleman possessed all of those characteristics and more. He apparently was a nice person as well. It may be recalled that Mr. Chapman had a special situation on his ad car and that was his wife. She was the contracting press agent and traveled with Advance Car #1. She performed her duties with great skill; one of the first woman to perform in this position. In a way, she was the precursor to Winnie Robbins, who shortly assumed the role of press agent with

the show. In any event, after the completion of the 1910 season, our new friend William was sensing about, seeking suitable employment for the 1911 season. It is not surprising that he wrote to Charles Chapman amongst a number of other shows about employment possibilities and therein lays a partial basis for this supplement.



Frank A. Robbins in front of his ticket wagon. Year unknown. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

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Many will recall that after the 1910 season ended, daughter Winnie eloped with a candy butcher named Ray Anders. Young Ray was the son of Frank Anders who was a long time FAR employee and the superintendent of the commissary. We noted in our series that apparently this marriage was a surprise to both Frank A. and his wife Mattie, but that was the extent of our knowl-



edge when writing about this situation. But within the Ken Harck's hoard of material, several sources of additional information reveal the true nature of Frank A.'s reaction to this wedding bliss. According to a clipped article from a Hoboken newspaper, his thoughts went much further than surprise. Under the headline, "HER FATHER IS NOW LOOKING FOR FORMER EMPLOYEE WITH A GUN," the article goes on to state, "With threats to kill on sight, Frank A. Robbins, the big circus owner, is searching for Roy W. Andrews (sic), a candy butcher, who yesterday eloped with his 18 year old daughter, Winona, from her home at 67 Conduit Street, Jersey City. After he had heard of the marriage last night, Robbins went to the jewelry store of Alfred T. Sorenson, the Justice who married the couple, threw an alarm clock at the clerk's head who was in charge of the store, and threatened to shoot the Justice who married his daughter.

"Robbins and his wife left home this morning in search of the eloping couple, who went last night to the Franklin Hotel, Altoona, Pennsylvania. For the past three weeks Anders had been living at 241 Henderson Street, under the name of Adams. It was said this morning at the boarding house that he claimed to be a burlesque actor. He never had any money, the boarding house keeper said but claimed that he would soon marry 'money.'

"Winona Robbins graduated from a seminary in June. She traveled all summer with her father in the circus as a vacation. Anders was employed with the show as a candy butcher, who is a man who sells popcorn and candy to the circus crowds. He was a good looking fellow and Miss Robbins fell in love with him. ..."

The Jersey City *Record* had this to say about the matter. "With a revolver in his hip pocket, Frank A. Robbins, the circus man, accompanied by several friends left for Altoona, Pennsylvania, today in the hope of locating his pretty 17-year old daughter, who eloped yesterday with Ray W. Anders, the 'candy butcher' with the show. Before his departure Robbins came within an ace of killing Benjamin Eleckson, a clerk employed in the jewelry store of



#### FRANK A. ROBBINS

Frank A. Robbins, veteran circus man, died Wednesday, October 13 in Riverside Hospital, Charleston, S. C., from the effects of injuries received when he fell twenty feet through a skylight at Andrews, S. C., on Sunday, October 10.

Frank A. Robbins was born in Edinburg, Ind., June 15, 1854. His first circus experience was with Hemming, Cooper & Whitby as a candy butcher. He started his own show May 6, 1881. This was one of the first big circuses to show in New York City in the American Institute. Mr. Robbins retired from the circus business in the fall of 1915, but as he could not stop, he entered the carnival business.

He also had circus acts in vaudeville. For twenty years he lived in Jersey City, which was the headquarters of his show. His show had a reputation that was unexcelled in the East, and Mr. Robbins was considered as one of the greatest outdoor showmen of the country. He was well and strong, with apparently many years to live, when he had a fall on Sunday, October 10, which injured his spine. He thought he was not seriously injured and did not send for his family until Tuesday. He died at noon on Wednesday October 13, before his wife and daughter arrived. The body was taken to Jersey City for burial. Mr. Robbins is survived by his widow, Matilda; a daughter, Winona G., and a son, Milton A., who is manager of the pit show with Gentry Bros. Circus. Among the carnival companies with which Mr. Robbins had been associated in an executive capacity were The Campbell United Shows, Famous Broadway Shows, Veal Bros. Shows, and at the time of his death he was acting in an official capacity with the James M. Benson Shows.

This Robbins obit appeared in the October 23, 1920 *Billboard*. The size indicates the high esteem he held in the circus community. In addition to the above copy there was a paragraph written by Doc Waddell.

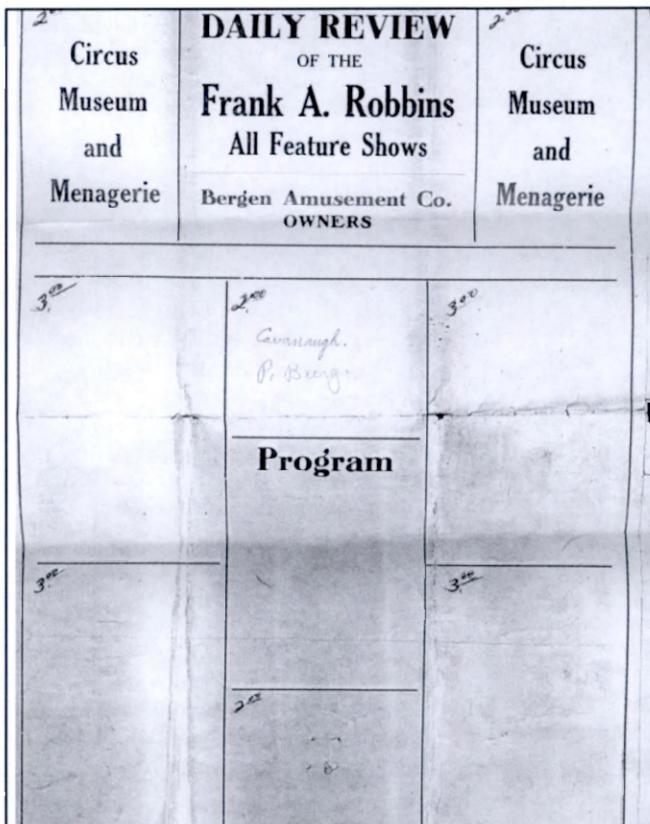
Justice of the Peace Alfred Sorenson, who married the couple and who the circus man had mistaken for the Justice. The irate parent threw a large clock at him, but the clerk ducked just in time. Word was later received that the couple were at the Franklin Hotel, Altoona.

"There won't be enough of that man left to fill a bushel basket," said the circus man, as he boarded a

train. "I'll fill him so full of holes that he'll look like a sieve."

The confrontation probably took place as intended but no shooting resulted. Frank A. was resigned to accept the marriage and to his great credit, he promoted his new son-in-law to general superintendent of the show during the 1911 season. But that was not the end of it for Frank A. He was so distraught over this marriage that he took to his frequently pursued means of solace, the bottle. The following letter from Mrs. Chapman to William Appleman reveals much in this regard. It also demonstrates the loyalty to Frank A. displayed by his employees.

On December 15th 1910 from her home in Jersey City, Mrs. Chapman wrote: "Friend Will: I should have written you before, but Mr. Chapman has been sick and I haven't been out much. The Rices (General Agent John Henry Rice) are living over to winter quarters in the office. There are three rooms. Mr. Rice has had to be with the Gov. (Frank A.) all the time. He attends to all the business. The Gov. has been in very bad shape after the daughter left. He (Frank A.) went on a jamboree and was off it just a week when he started again. Some one has had to be with him every minute. He was dreadfully sick but is coming into line O.K. now. We have been expecting you. Why don't you come? All it will cost you is your fare. You can stay here and we always have something to eat. I know you can get work too. I will help you, if you want. You probably could get something right here in the paint shop or something else or get into a store. If you had come sooner, there has been lots of ads in the Jersey City paper and the New York *World* every day. One of the men brings it to us. ..." She goes on to discuss the various circus folks that visited and stayed for a few or more days. Mrs. Chapman closes with another plea that will join her and Mr. Chapman for Christmas and help them eat the turkey. The feeling from the letter is that Will could continue on at their home and join the advance for the 1911 season. It is not known if Will did in fact accept the Chapman's kind invitation but he was definitively on the show for the



1911 season which brings us to the second part of this supplement. But in closing this segment, it is obvious that Frank A. was devastated by Winnie's marriage. It is also interesting to note that during this period of heavy and continuous drinking, he was staying at the winter quarters and not at home, a short distance away. It isn't surprising that his wife, Mattie, would not tolerate such behavior in her husband and would not let him stay at the family home.

In Re. Programming--Besides lithographs, the most widely collected circus memorabilia are circus programs. The first circus programs in America were probably handouts representing a mere listing of the acts. In the late 1800s the programs were basically a collection of local advertisement, plus the performance listing.

Some early heralds or flyers accomplished the same purpose. As the circus became larger and more sophisticated, it was constantly seeking additional sources of revenue and the multipage program was born. For instance, Barnum was using a single page flyer program for at least some stands during 1873, and a four pager containing many local ads.

The page layout sheet at left listed the cost of various sized ads being sold. The price was two or three dollars each.

On the right is the form with the ads in place. This sheet was used for three New Jersey stands from April 26 to 29. Ken Harck collection.

There may have been a number of shows using multipage programs containing the local ads prior to this time. It is clear that by 1880, all the big circuses were using this method of revenue enhancement. It is suspected that many of the smaller circuses also availed themselves to this technique as well. As time went on and the desire of the local venders of goods and services to present their wares before a huge public that might actually read their ads and use their products, the daily programs often expanded to eight or perhaps more pages. In the most favored condition, each page of the program would set forth several acts in the order of presentation and the remainder of the page would be filled with local ads. In the situation where there were too few ads to fill the page, then circus related wood cuts would be added to eliminate any

 Talk to Dr. Bernhardt About Your Eyes	<b>DAILY REVIEW</b> <b>Frank A. Robbins</b> <b>All Feature Shows</b> <b>Bergen Amusement Co.</b> <b>OWNERS</b>	 Talk to Dr. Bernhardt About Your Eyes
<small>Established in practice since 1880. 30 NEWARK AVE., JERSEY CITY, N.J. Phone 885-1, Jersey City.</small>		
<small>Greenville April 26-27.</small> <small>Telephone: BERGEN 1862.</small>	<small>Warren St. April 28.</small> <small>Telephone: 1111-1, Bergen.</small>	<small>Central Ave. and North St. April 29.</small> <small>Telephone: BERGEN 1862.</small>
<b>S. T. HUNT</b> <small>Dealer in</small> <b>Builders' Hardware</b> <small>Painters' and Factory Supplies</small> <small>400 TO 412 COMMUNIPAW AVENUE</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>	<b>T. J. BUTLER</b> <b>AUTOMOBILES</b> <small>Haynes Reo</small>	<b>G. R. LAWRENCE</b> <b>Coal, Feed</b> <small>Grain, Hay, Straw, &amp;c.</small>
<small>Crude and Painted, Ready Mixed Paints, Saler Paint Oil.</small> <small>Per Gal. \$1.20 Per Gal. 45c</small>	<small>Office and Suburbans 312-314 BERGEN AVE.</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>	<small>YARD One Palmetto and Bergen Avenue New Jersey</small>
<small>TELEPHONE CONNECTION,</small> <b>Columbia Hall</b> <small>C. LOERTSCHER, Prop.</small> <b>Dancing &amp; Entertainment HALL</b> <small>LOUNGE ROOMS BOWLING ALLEYS SHOOTING GALLERY</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>	<small>Program</small> <small>DISPLAY NO. 1.</small> <small>The First Program, in which the performers, animals, circus, and others appear in attractive form, and the acts are arranged in a manner that permits which are to follow in rapid succession for a short time.</small> <small>DISPLAY NO. 2.</small> <small>March of the Amazons. A party mounted on horses, in which the different horses are dressed.</small> <small>DISPLAY NO. 3.</small> <small>The Four Horsemen, in a novelty who act, in which are presented many unusual forms of dancing on a small stage.</small> <small>DISPLAY NO. 4.</small> <small>Balancing Trapeze, Charlie Diamond, Flying Rings, Miss. Long, Cloud Swings, Dolly Long.</small> <small>204 OCEAN AVENUE.</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>	<small>PHONE CONNECTION.</small> <b>BROWN</b> <i>The</i> <b>CLEANSE</b> <small>MONARCH FIRE &amp; INSURANCE COMPANY</small> <small>Celestino Auriemma</small> <small>High Grade The ORIGINAL COTTON CANDY Ladies' Tailor</small> <small>113 DANFORTH AVE.</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>
<small>CHAS. RUSKIN</small> <small>Wholesale Jobber in</small> <b>Builders' Hardware</b> <small>Wall Paper and Painters' Supplies</small> <small>278 Newark Ave., 323 Third Street</small> <small>JERSEY CITY, N. J.</small>	<small>STOEVERSON AGE</small> <small>FIRE PROOF SANITARY</small> <small>LOWEST INSURANCE RATES EQUIPMENT</small> <small>COMMUNIPAW AVE., OPPOSITE JACKSON</small>	<small>dead space on that page. To the extent known to this writer, the programs as described were given away free at the entrance to the circus, their cost being defrayed by the advertising contained there. We shall discuss the all important costs and revenues below. This format was used by the circuses until the end of the 19th century.</small> <small>Buffalo Bill's Wild West was perhaps the sole exception to this process. When the Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition, starring Buffalo Bill and Dr. Carver took to the road in 1883, it sold a 16 page magazine that had articles about the features and the wild west in general. It probably had a single page insert that listed the acts and presentations. While there is no cost of the magazine displayed, it probably sold for a nickel or dime. It was a prize possession and that is why there are so many still around. There were no ads contained in the publication. There was definitely an insert listing the acts used in the 1884 Buffalo Bill's Wild West Magazine. Again no ads. While the Buffalo Bill program grew in size and the number of articles enhanced, the earliest evidence of ads that I have</small>

seen is in the 1895 program, the initial year of a touring Buffalo Bill Show. There are 20 pages of ads in addition to the 64 pages of text. All of the ads appear to be national and are actually printed and incorporated as part of the publication. It is noted that the 1895 program also sets forth a purchase price, that being 10 cents. The stated purchase price on the cover was initiated on the 1894 program. By 1900, Buffalo Bill's magazine contained a combination of local ad inserts and national ads as part and parcel of the principal publication, thereby joining the cadre of shows that required a local programmer.

In 1892 Barnum & Bailey issued a magazine style program featuring its Columbus Discovers America spec. This program included national advertising.

When Barnum & Bailey left the United States in early 1898 for a five year European tour, it left its tabloid size program behind and adopted a program magazine format similar to that utilized by Buffalo Bill for many years.

The Barnum & Bailey program issued for the 1899 Olympia engagement in London included advertising.

To the extent known, the tabloid format remained in use by other circuses until around 1900 when Forepaugh-Sells adopted the magazine format with program inserts for local ads. In fact, it appears that during 1900, Forepaugh-Sells used both the tabloid and magazine programs during different parts of the season. In the early 1900's, larger circuses gravitated toward the magazine format with inserts for the actual pro-

This 1911 view shows Robbins sitting with his staff. Circus World Museum collection.



gram and local ads. The national ads were printed as part of the magazine itself. Then the circuses started experimenting with the program format with Sells-Floto leading the pack in developing new ideas of presentation.

Robbins is buried in the Old Jersey City Cemetery in Jersey City, New Jersey. Bob Sabia photo.

The American Circus Corporation used a large sheet music size arrangement which contained many ads, a small number of articles, and the program, all of which remained more or less intact throughout the season. Always the traditionalist, Ringling-Barnum used the insert format through the 1927 road season. From 1928 forward, the road tour program was generally printed as part of the magazine with such local ads incorporated therein. These program editions included the names of a group of cities.

The trend toward national ads grew on every show at the expense of local ads so by the mid-thirties, local ads no longer were part of the circus programs, and with the absence of the local ads went the need of the programmer.

And what does all of the foregoing have to do with Frank A. Robbins and William Appleman. Plenty, because the material provided by Ken Harck gives us an insight into the economics of programming. Like any good circus, Frank A. Robbins provided a printed program for its patrons during most years. Generally it was in the tabloid format, containing four or more pages. At least in one year (1909), Robbins used a magazine format published by I. M. Southern. Our friend, Will

Appleman, signed a contract with his mentor, Charles Chapman, on 31 January 1911, to be a special agent and secretary to Mr. Chapman during the coming season. He may have assumed the duties of the programmer from time to time as well. For his services, he was paid \$45 per month in addition to room

and board on the advance car. The programmer traveled with the advance car under the direction of Mr. Chapman. On a show of the size



of Frank A. Robbins, on the same day that the lithographers were doing their thing, the programmer made his rounds of the various businesses in the community selling ad space in the soon-to-be published program, at various prices. For instance, a whole page could be purchased for \$12; a half page for \$7 and smaller ads from \$2 to \$5. I suspect that seldom if ever a whole page was sold. If it was, it possibly could grow the program from its normal four to six pages. Most of the ads were of the smaller size and if the entire four pages were sold, the publication would garner about \$75 in revenue.

On the opposite side of the ledger, there was the salary of the programmer and the printing costs. We have noted that Will Appleman was making about \$10 per week. Room and board probably was costed at \$1 per day. All costs related to the advance car including movements would be assigned to the advance so the programmer was not allocated any costs related to this activity. Only printing costs remain.

On a show of FAR's size, it is estimated two to three thousand of the programs would be printed at a cent per sheet or about \$15 printing costs. The printing would be done by the local newspaper. So the potential for a significant contribution to the coffers was great. Even if the total daily revenue was only \$70 and the cost of printing was a penny a page, then the total contribution would approach \$35. Over the season, well over \$6,000 could be made by aggressive programming.

On a show like Barnum & Bailey, the local ads probably could contribute \$35,000 or more. So Appleman did his share to make Frank A. Robbins a wealthy man. Unfortunately, he could not do enough. However, we remain indebted to Will Appleman for saving these important insights into the life of Frank A. Robbins and his circus, and Ken Harck for making them available to this interested person.

# Side Lights On The Circus Business

## PART TWENTY-NINE

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.*

**May 27, 1916**

It was in 1884 or 1885 that the Adam Forepaugh show came west and from the time of the opening of the show in Philadelphia, workingmen were scarce in every department, and more especially on canvas where the work was considered the hardest. The boss canvasman had to hire extra help in almost every town to get the show up on time in the morning.

It was while showing in a town in Indiana that a young man, some twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, came to the ticket wagon and wanted to know if there was a chance to get a job with the show. I asked him what he could do, and he said he had always been used to hard work on the farm and could do any kind of hard labor. I sent for Dan Taylor, the boss canvasman, who hired the young man and put him to work on canvas. By the time the show was half out that night, a hard rain set in which continued all night and made it a severe test for the young man; first night in the business. It was along about midnight with the rain pouring down and mud five inches deep that an old-timer in the business met the newcomer with a heavy load of plank seats on his shoulder and wading through six inches of mud. The old-timer hollered to the newcomer and said: "Well," country, how do you like it as far as you've gone?"

The young man responded saying that he guessed it would be all right, "but it is pretty sloppy going." This gave the Indiana Hoosier a nickname that never left him as long as he

lived. When the first payday came, the boss canvasman was there with many new names to add to the payroll and among the rest was the nickname given the young man from Indiana, "Sloppy Going." There were many among the drivers and canvasmen with the show in those days that were on the payroll and known only around the show by some nickname given them years before, much in the same way that this young man received his name on the first rainy night with the circus and all by accident.

It was through an old-timer here with the Coop & Lent show that I heard that "Sloppy Going" died late this last winter and quite an article appeared in the St. Louis paper in which it said that he had put in more than thirty years of his life with different known under the name of

The four original Gentry brothers. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



"Sloppy Going." When this old-timer told me of his death, he said, "Dave, you must have known him for he was with the Adam Forepaugh show several years ago." I remember well the night that he joined out for the first time with the circus and I signed him up on the first contract that he ever worked under with the show. But "Sloppy" has gone to his reward which will be all that could be given to an honest and faithful servant.

On Monday last, J. B. Austin, general contractor of the Ringling show, dropped into Janesville and was soon making contracts for the coming of the show on August 16. Although I only had a short visit with Mr. Austin, he gave me something of an idea of the years that he had been in the business. "For," he said, "this is only my second season with the Ringlings. I commenced in the show business with the Gentry Brothers dog and pony shows which are the highest class of their kind in the business and for some years have always played in and around the larger cities."

It is fair to say that the Gentry Brothers are high class educators for there is no less than four or five high class men with the different big shows today that started in the business with the Gentrys.

Mr. Austin is a pleasant gentleman to meet, all business all the time, and he only had about thirty minutes for finishing his work here before catching a train for the east, for he was wanted in Pittsburgh to settle a matter that he knew more about than anyone else with the show. So it is with many men well up in the business. They commence their career with the smaller shows, and if they were of the right material, they never failed to work up to the



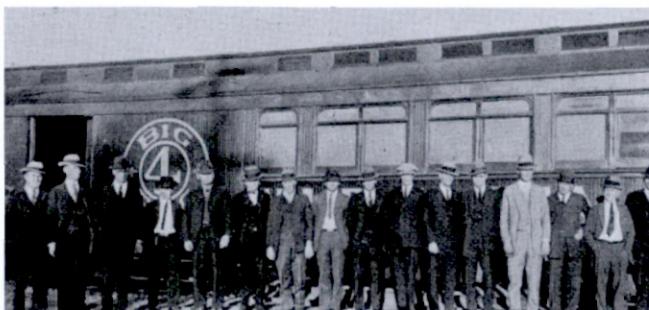
J. B. Austin, contractor for Ringling Bros.

large shows which also meant to a larger salary.

William Murray, the boss canvas man with the Sells-Floto show some two or three years ago, patented a device for loading and unloading the large canvases with the show. I met a friend a few days ago who had been in the show business for some years and was in Burlington and Davenport, IA. When the Sells-Floto show exhibited there last week. His curiosity was to see Murray's new canvas load at work, which he did. He said it was the greatest labor saving device that he had ever seen. The work is all done by a small gasoline engine which is attached to the big canvas wagon, and after the canvas is folded and the gasoline engine started, the work is soon done.

He said that Jess Willard and Frank Gotch were certainly good features with the show for at Davenport both afternoon and evening they

The crew of the Al G. Barnes advance advertising car.



turned away people. Fred Hutchinson, a nephew of the late James A. Bailey, is the acting manager of the show and has been for some years.

On May 9th, when the Barnum & Bailey show was exhibiting in Washington, D. C., President and Mrs. Wilson accompanied by their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. McAdoo, and a large party, were guests of the show. The President enjoyed the show and the entire party remained for the Wild West concert. On May 3rd, the Al G. Barnes show which exhibits here June 9th, experienced its first serious accident of the season. While making a run from Fallon, Nev., to Susanville, Cal., the engineer of the circus train failed to notice the block signal at a crossing of the Western Pacific. A derailing switch was open and the engine and one show car turned turtle. As usual on any occasion of importance, Proprietor Al G. Barnes, Al Sands and Superintendent Charles Cook got busy and had over 200 men on the spot in less time than it takes to write it. There was very little damage to the show property and no fatalities.

On Friday morning of this week Car No. 1 of the Al G. Barnes Circus arrived over the Northwestern Road at eight o'clock in charge of Harry Davis, who had in charge eighteen bill posters. Five teams to do the country billing were on hand and in less than half an hour they were all started to bill the country for a distance of twenty-five miles around. Harry Davis has been with the Barnes show for five years and is well up in the business, especially that of the advance and has a system for his work that runs like a clock.

The show since starting out has added some new features, one being a \$5,000 automobile bandwagon on which leads the parade, and every cage in parade is an open den for performing animals.

Mr. Barnes, not to be outdone by the Sells-Floto show, has added Fred Fulton, the heavyweight who is matched to fight Jess Willard on Labor Day, and is said to be a great attraction with the show. The show will exhibit in Rockford on the sixth of June, Freeport the seventh, Beloit the eighth, Janesville the ninth, Madison the tenth and Milwaukee the eleventh and twelfth.

Although it is practically a new show to this part of the country, it stands out alone, as being the greatest animal circus in the world. The papers that they are putting on the billboards and hanging in store windows are as fine as any I have ever seen in the business.



The Al G. Barnes bandwagon mounted on a truck.

#### June 3, 1916

On Wednesday of this week I received a picture of an old friend, Jules Turnour, an old time clown with the Ringling show. Jules was holding in his arms a child apparently not more than one and a half or two years of age who was laughing and appearing to have the time of his life, poking his finger in the old clown's mouth. It is safe to say that ninety nine out of one hundred the age of this one would be frightened almost to death at the make-up of a clown in the circus, but this one at first sight of the old clown commenced to wave his hands and laugh, the clown taking the child from its mother's arms and the two were evidently having the time of their lives and at the same pleasing the audience.

Jules Turnour has been a clown

with the Ringling show for more than twenty years and is one of a famous family of circus performers by that name for generations back. Jules came to this country from England in the middle '80's and for two years was with the Burr Robbins show, and many of the old timers in Janesville will recollect him, for when with the Robbins show, he spent several weeks of each year in the spring in Janesville. He is a brother to Millie Turnour who thirty years ago was the greatest balancing trapeze woman in the business.

In Europe, in most cases, these people keep in the business for generations back and the children, as a rule, are educated either as bareback riders, wire performers, clowns or whatever they seem to be the best fitted for. They seem to follow along one generation after another like many Rock and Green County farmers, sons or merchants as the case may be.

Reno McCree, a well known rider.

Jules Turnour has always been thrifty in the business, always commanding a good salary and saving his money. He owns a nice farm in Michigan where his wife and family of several children live and where he spends a part of the winter when not on the road.

A few days ago while visiting with a traveling man the conversation after a time drifted into circus business and he told me for many years his home had been in Neillsville, Wisconsin. "I remember well," he said, "many years ago when I was quite a young man when the Burr Robbins show, which at that time was a wagon show, had made a long drive over a corduroy road during a heavy storm for many miles. The man ahead of the show arrived there early in the morning only to find that the lot contracted for by the show was all under water. But the man soon got busy and found a high piece of ground which was the only available place for the show and soon

made a contract for a new lot. When the show arrived, he directed them to the new grounds and along later in the morning the weather cleared and I heard Burr Robbins say that night in the hotel that it was one of the biggest days receipts of the season.

"But" the traveling man continued, "when he arrived that morning and found the man ahead had changed the lot and had to pay some fifteen or twenty dollars more for the new one than the old one was contracted for, I remember well how Burr Robbins lost his temper and he and the man ahead that had hired the new lot, had quite a set to. Robbins claimed that he should have contracted for the lot for half the money he had paid."

Then I told this man that I was the man ahead that contracted the lot and that I was with Burr Robbins for five years as both ticket agent and

manager. I told him also that I would certainly never forget that all night drive through the rain and over corduroy roads and the hard time I had

to contract for the lot which belonged to a dry goods merchant in the town and which he used as a pasture and did not want it all cut up by the heavy wagons. It was more to accommodate the show than anything else that I got it at all. It

took the influence of the landlord of the hotel where we were stopping and the banker who went with me that he was finally persuaded to let us have it. The Burr Robbins show went out of Neillsville that night with more than a thousand dollars to the good. It is meeting men of this kind that often brings back incidents in the business that have long been forgotten.

The circus world will be shocked to learn of the sudden death of Reno McCree of the McCree-Davenport troupe, bareback riders with the Ringling Brothers Circus, at Dayton, O., Tuesday May 16th. McCree was attacked with a stroke of apoplexy during the performance in the afternoon after he and others in the act had gone through several equestrian

feats and were receiving the applause of the crowd. Men nearby rushed to the ring and found him unconscious. He was immediately carried outside the big top and died within a few minutes.

Working with McCree at the time he was stricken were his wife, his son and his daughter-in-law. With marvelous bravery and self-control they finished the act not knowing that McCree's condition was so serious. So quickly was he removed from the ring that many of the audience knew nothing of the interruption?

The deceased was forty-six years of age, thirty-five of which he spent in the circus ring. He traveled with the Ringling Brothers Circus for a number of years and was one of the best liked ring artists in the country. He was a brother of Junie McCree of New York, writer of vaudeville sketches.

During the Kansas City engagement of the Sells-Floto Circus Billy Sunday, the evangelist divided honors with Jess Willard as an attraction at the afternoon performance.

Some years ago the late Al Ringling bought a few acres of land bordering on what has been known for many years as Loch Mirror Park, meaning Mirror Lake. This is a beautiful spot and is between Baraboo and the Dells of Wisconsin on the old stage road between the two towns, about ten miles from Baraboo and four miles from the Dells. Al Ringling from his boyhood days had looked on this as one of the beauty spots of the country and although he did but little to improve it before his death, his widow is now erecting two beautiful cottages on the grounds and will, doubtless in the future with friends, spend more or less of her time at the Park on Mirror Lake which was the choice of her husband some years ago.

A daily paper published in Douglas, Arizona recently went considerably out of its way to hand a slam to circus folks. In a story regarding the Chautauqua to be held there, the writer of the item solemnly assured the readers that the "Chautauqua men are not regular show people. They are gentlemen. Remember, Chautauqua is not a circus, but a dignified entertainment." However, that this opinion amounts



to little even in Douglas is shown by the fact that the Chamber of Commerce of that city has been making efforts for some time to have circuses make that city their winter quarters.

A graphic illustration of the labor situation was finished in Trenton, N. J. Barnum & Bailey's circus reached the city about daybreak. Superintendents from the mills of the city were on the grounds and succeeded in hiring one hundred and fifty of the employees of the circus to go to work at double to four times their previous salary. The circus was forced to abandon the parade and the afternoon performance. Another large circus met with a similar experience in Plainfield. A third has canceled its eastern bookings.

About a month or so ago a Salt Lake City daily carried a small article to the effect that Al Ringling—although he was dead at that time—was in Pocatello, Idaho looking over the surrounding country with a view to purchasing a large ranch for winter quarters for the stock of his circus business. While everybody knew positively that this was all bunk, it was learned that the said party was an impostor, terming himself "Al Ringling, Jr." and that he is in jail at Idaho Falls charged with having attempted to gain funds by issuing a bogus check.

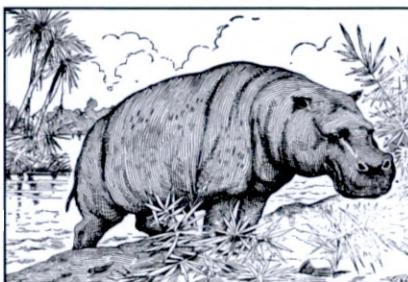
#### June 10, 1916

On Tuesday last I received a letter from Joseph T. Condon, legal adjuster with the Coop & Lent Show, written from Middleton, O. To give you something of an idea of the hardships that circus folks have to encounter, especially in seasons like this, I will give you his letter in full: "Friend Dave: I have had my hands full since I saw you in Janesville and am in arrears in my correspondence. Well, we are still in the rain and it looks like a rainy season ahead. The show has been doing a remarkable business in the face of the bad weather and everyone is satisfied. We have had a great deal of trouble keeping workingmen, but have not lost a stand since leaving Janesville. We had several days of tough sledding on account of being short of help, but the performers, band boys, ticket sellers, butchers, etc. come to the

front and everyone puts his shoulder to the wheel. Even the women folks volunteered to help which goes to show that everybody is with it.

We have some real troupers on this show and, in fact, it is just one big family. Taking everything into consideration, I think we have surrounded ourselves with as good a bunch of real show folks as any organization on the road.

"Our business in Illinois and northern Indiana was big; Chicago Heights, Gary, Ind., and Kokomo were great, and we ring-banked them in all three places. The show is doing a big night business which speaks well for the performance. North Vernon, Indiana was shown in a terrible storm and nearly blew us down, ripped one side of the big top to pieces and blew the seats down, but we got everybody out in time. We



finally got fixed up and gave one show at three o'clock and got \$900. We got off the lot at six o'clock next morning, jumped 65 miles to Lawrenceburg, Ind. and opened the doors for the big show at 1 p.m. That's what I call going some.

"Well, Dave, all the boys are well and send regards. I trust this finds you and your wife in good health. Will send you route as soon as it is out. Let me hear from you. Yours respectfully, Jos. T. Condon"

On Tuesday a new species of Miller dropped into Janesville. It was not the kind of a miller that grinds your wheat, nor was it a moth miller that eats a hole in your clothes. It was Miss Emma C. Miller of Pasadena, California in a new role--that of press agent with the Al G. Barnes great animal circus. She had not been in Janesville but a short time when she sent a messenger after me, saying that she wanted an interview with *Side Lights on the Circus*.

Miss Miller's home is in Pasadena, California and her first work was on

the newspapers of that city. Occasionally she would write an article for different magazines, and after Mr. Barnes had heard of her work, he was not long in making up his mind that if he could secure her services as press agent with the show, that it would be a new innovation in the business and one that he thought would surely make a hit.

Miss Miller is thoroughly in love with her new position and the kind that will make friends wherever she goes. She told me that the first few days in the business she thought it a question whether she would be received by the newspapers of the country in a kind way, but said that everybody had been so kind and gracious to her that she felt as though this might possibly be her life work.

Miss Miller showed me a scrapbook she carries with her with many notices from different papers praising her in her new work and many other pithy articles which she has written herself for the different papers throughout the country. While Miss Miller is the first to undertake the field as press agent with the circus, it is fair to say that the time is coming when others will follow in her footsteps.

Buffalo Bill is heroic. He would permit no man to handle a golf club if he had first mastered the rifle, advocates universal military training and would like to see a military preparedness camp pitched on every golf course in the nation. Incidentally, after the world's series, the veteran plainsman thinks it might be a good plan to turn the baseball diamonds into fields for maneuvers.

It is probable that no other individual in the United States, outside of Col. William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), could have interested the government to the extent of loaning soldiers from the regular army for use in the military spectacle as has been done in the case of the Buffalo Bill 101 Ranch Shows. About 2,000 orphans of Philadelphia saw the show on May 23 when it showed there.

With the almost continuous downfall of rain for several days, the average person is apt to say, "I never before saw the likes of this rainy, bad weather," but when I check up the years back, I find that in three weeks

in the early part of 1880 that we only saw the sun twice. This was in the days of the Burr Robbins wagon show.

On one trip of twenty-five miles from Monroe to Freeport, I paid out \$85 to farmers to help us over the road and then we did not arrive in Freeport until noon the next day. In Monroe we had what we called a pack-up breakfast and were on the road at 9:30 in the evening.

Also with the Adam Forepaugh show in 1880 when in the East, we had many heavy rains and when the show arrived in Bradford, Pa., we found the town which was located principally in the valley submerged in water anywhere from a foot to four feet deep. In the office of the hotel where we were contracted to stay, the water measured two feet and four inches. All the heating plants in the town were out and the show moved on to the next town. I stayed back and spent the day in Bradford, paying bills and getting out of it as cheap as I could, for this day was a total loss.

Although the shows this season have had much bad weather and many, many that I have heard from have been doing a good business in many of the towns in spite of the bad weather, this is not the only year that shows have had their own troubles on account of rainy, bad weather which they all hope will be over soon.

#### June 17, 1916

In a letter from the Cole Brothers show a few days ago they gave an account of a performance given by the entire company in the yard of Michigan City penitentiary which is located at Michigan City. All prisoners in the penitentiary witnessed the performance which was given in full. Many of them had not witnessed a circus in twenty-five years or more and watched the performance with tears in their eyes for it carried them back to their boyhood days when they ran away from home and carried water for the elephants to get into the show.

The brass band belonging to the prison joined the two bands of the show which furnished music every moment the performance was going on. At the close, the warden made a



Al G. Barnes, king of the West Coast showmen.

speech thanking Cole Brothers for their generosity and closed by saying that they had gladdened more hearts of their unfortunate men than could possibly have been done in any other way.

If every circus on the road would make it a point to give a performance of this kind whenever they struck a city where a penitentiary is located, it would be a humane act which hundreds of people would long remember.

On the arrival of the Al G. Barnes show on Friday morning of last week, an automobile pulled up in front of the Myers Hotel and I immediately recognized one of the occupants and stepped up and shook hands with him. He took a good look at me and said: "Don't believe that I recollect you." While I could not call him by name, I knew the face and also that I had traveled with him with the Adam Forepaugh show. I said to him: "You certainly ought to recollect me, for all the money that you ever earned while with the Adam Forepaugh show, I paid to you."

He immediately grabbed my hand and called me by name and said: "You certainly have some memory, for I was only, with the Adam Forepaugh show one year and that was in '85. Just think of it" he said, "thirty-one years ago."

"Although I was just out of my teens at that time, I was a big team driver and worked under Bill Connors, who was boss hostler. But with the thousands that were coming and going at that time with the Forepaugh show, it is wonderful that you could recollect me."

This man's name was Ernest Houghton, and he is presently assistant manager of the Barnes Show.

The next gentleman that I met was P. J. Staunton, the press agent, who has put in many years in the business and always with the bigger shows. He was busy looking after the newspapers so there was but little time to gather information from him.

Because of the bad weather and shortage of workingmen, everything was late. I did not go to the lot to see Mr. Barnes until two o'clock in the afternoon. I soon found him in the big top more than an hour before they could possibly let in any of the people, for they had not started to put up the seats and yet under these trying circumstances, Al Barnes gave me a warm welcome with a smile on his face. When I attempted to console him on the bad weather and the almost continuous rain of the last few days, the smile on his face simply broadened when he said, "Dave, you know it is these rough places and bad days that make us enjoy the smooth ones."

I could account for the continuous smile on the face of the great animal trainer in this way. It is a known fact that in the training of animals, more particularly the cage or cat animals, as they are called in the business, that you must keep on smiling. It is their temperament and will that you must study at all times and never lose your temper for a single instant.

Mr. Barnes commenced back in his early career in the business and gave me a few facts as to the hardships that he went through before he could get up in the business, when he could afford to hire trainers or helpers.

He was born in London, Ontario and always had a fondness for horses and dogs and in fact all kinds of animals and at the age of twelve was known for miles around as the boy that could handle the most vicious

dogs and horses in the country. In this way he got his start. After going through many hardships he has finally become recognized and is now famous as the greatest animal trainer in the world.

For some years the show has been so large that Mr. Barnes has looked after the management and has several trainers with him that are famous the world over. Most of them came from Europe.

W. K. Peck, who is the general route agent and railroad contractor, slipped away from Chicago long enough to spend a day with his employer in Janesville and have a visit with his old friend, for Peck and I were closely associated with the Adam Forepaugh show for ten years.

In my time in the business Adam Forepaugh, Jr. was supposed to be the greatest animal trainer of his day, but his work consisted of elephants, horses and ponies, and he never undertook the task of the cage animals. During my visit with Mr. Barnes, he gave me several incidents which happened with his show in the last few years, part of which I will give you.

William K. Peck, an associate of Al G. Barnes.

During the present year a Royal Bengal tiger was received direct from its native haunts in India, a snarling, fighting man-eater. He was placed in a cage near the other tigers and where people were constantly passing. After two weeks he was taken in charge by Miss Stark and in two more weeks was ready for preliminary tiger lessons. In the groups of trained tigers handled by Miss Stark is King, an animal to all appearances tamed and not dangerous, but this animal is one of the most ferocious in the entire menagerie, and the trainer never dares to turn her back towards the beast, for he would instantly take the chance to make a meal of the girl, a chance he has been awaiting for many a day.



The first steps of an animal's training are nerve-racking and time consuming and for weeks and more, often months, scarcely no progress seems evident. Every step in the plan must be gone over and over with unfailing similarity. It must be done, too. There's absolutely no shirking nor any part of the work skipped, for that would mean that all previous efforts would be lost and have to be done over again.

The first step is to name the animals and to teach them the name. It is never changed. The name is the one fundamental cue for their work. This is followed by some small tasks to be learned one at a time, thoroughly, and the same routine is usually carried out through the entire acting life of the animals.

One of the very great essentials in wild animal training is to never let the animal being trained know its power. The very moment the animal realizes its great strength and what it can do, training is at an end. A seeming pent-up hatred for all mankind flares forth and the trainer is in imminent danger of death.

Ability to determine the disposition of an animal at any time is another important thing for the trainer to know. Their moods are subject to frequent changes and unless the trainer is able to observe such conditions, his chances for a long life are mighty slim. We have many examples of this. The group of twenty-four African lions presented by Herr Roth in one act this season with the Barnes Circus is an illustration. On some occasions as many as eight or ten of the beasts are ruled from the act by Herr Roth who makes a careful inspection of the lions before the act starts and allows only those to enter the arena that do not show signs of vicious ill-temper.

Another example was that of Miss Dolly Castle during a performance at Wichita, Kas. Miss Castle entered

the cage of the well-known man killing lion, Caesar Wallace, before observing the lion's temper. Immediately she entered the cage the big cat seized the young woman by the shoulder and carried her about his cage for several minutes before the attendants could make him loosen the powerful jaws.

Trainers are frequently injured in an accidental way by the animals but to acknowledge such injury by look or action would be fatal. Unwise indeed is that trainer who makes any show of pain or annoyance from an injury while working with wild animals.

On account of the rain and bad weather, the show perhaps made less than half their expenses. They left a name that Mr. Barnes should be proud of, and if he will come again when the sun shines, Janesville and Rock County will give him a reception that will gladden his heart.

#### June 24, 1916

Some three weeks ago Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stickney, famous circus riders, returned to their home in Cincinnati from Havana, Cuba, where they finished an engagement of several months with the Pubillones show of that country. The Pubillones are the Ringlings of Cuba and have long ranked highest in their business there.

Bob Stickney, as he is well known in the business, has been a famous rider for more than half a century and has always been a credit to any show that was fortunate enough to secure his services. I traveled with him in the middle eighties and although he has passed his three-score year and some, he would pass readily for forty-five. While many years have been counted against him, he is the kind that will die young.

Bob Stickney's first wife was the only daughter of Uncle John Robinson of Cincinnati who had been famous in the circus world for many years. They had one child, Robert Jr., but the mother died when Robert was quite young. Young Stickney was kept at a boarding school for years and along in the latter eighties he graduated with high honors from one of the big eastern colleges.

After he had finished school he came on to the Forepaugh show and

spent two weeks with his father who had expected that young Robert would study law in Cincinnati and become a lawyer and famous legal light. These plans did not work out, for the young man took to the circus business and nothing else seemed to appeal to him.

Two years ago Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stickney, Jr. were in Janesville with the Hagenbeck-Wallace show and besides doing two or three fine acts, he was assistant equestrian director of the show. It was Mrs. Stickney who drove the snow-white rig with the educated horse which stood straight on his hind legs when hitched to the wagon, one of the highest class acts in the show.

Mrs. Robert Stickney II has long been a famous rider and her last visit to Janesville was with the Barnum & Bailey show the last year it was here under the management of James A. Bailey. She rides bareback in her street clothes and is the only one I know of the kind.

Of all the trained animals on exhibition today probably "Tina," a very small elephant belonging to Rhoda Royal and exhibited all through the Majestic circuit last year, attracted more attention than any other one. The troupe consisted of two high school horses, a pony, a collie dog and Tina. They were billed for a two weeks' engagement in Minneapolis last fall early in the winter and on their arrival in that city, they were met at the depot with a band and marched up town. After putting the rest of the stock in the barn, the manager took Tina and started out for a walk.

If there was any one thing that Tina liked it was a bottle of beer. The manager would walk into a saloon with her and buy her a bottle of beer, and the second the cork was pulled, Tina would grab the bottle and not take it away from her mouth until she had swallowed the contents. They had not gone down the street very far when the crowd got so great the police had to order him to take his partner and retire to the theater. Tina was one of the wise ones that soon learned to do everything that her master did, with the exception of smoking a cigar. There she drew the line,

but a bottle of beer, ginger ale or pop was always relished by Tina. She with the high school horses and collie dog, which could do almost everything but talk, were never short of an engagement and always at a high price.

Robert Stickney, a famous rider.

Of all the educated animals in captivity that you would expect to have but little intelligence and yet among the easiest to learn is the sea lion, and all those in captivity have been educated far beyond what the average person would suspect. Sea lions possess remarkable intelligence and after being tamed are of an affectionate disposition. If taken when young, they can be made tame as dogs answering to their names and following their keepers. When wild they are very vicious and rule all known living creatures of the ocean having teeth of the most terrible tearing propensities; they are really kings of the ocean.

The best specimens of sea lions are to be found along the Alaskan and California coasts. Their habits are peculiar. While they apparently live in the water, they are quite at home

Sea lions, sometimes known as sea elephants. Richard Reynolds collection.



on land. Water to them is only a means of locomotion, not of life, as with fish. They breathe air like a man with the difference that the sea lion can remain under water for a long period of time because of the special organs with which their heart and blood vessels are supplied. Nose and ear apertures are closed to the entrance of water by a delicate muscular arrangement and their eyes enable them to see very clearly under water.

The sea lion is considerably larger than the common seal and differs in method of land locomotion, having a double tail-end flipper instead

of the one possessed by the seal. Its agility on land is surprising and always excites the astonishment and hilarity of spectators.

The young sea lion takes to the water very reluctantly and must be taught to swim by its parents. The cub is first covered with an oil secretion from its mother's skin and then pushed into the water. These animals delight in thunderstorms, seeming to get the greatest pleasure from watching an elemental disturbance. In captivity they display the greatest affection for each other and when one of a pair dies, the other often pines away and dies.

Those with the Barnum show are unquestionably the most proficiently educated of any exhibited. Especially is this true of those that have been taught to ride galloping ponies and while so engaged juggle different articles on the tips of their noses.

July 1, 1916

A few days ago J. B. Hogan, manager of the Beverly theater of this city, handed me a route book of the Ringling show for the season of 1901. In this book is the finest description of the season's work of the great show that I have ever seen. In addition to this, Mr. Hogan tells many inter-



esting stories and happenings along the way during the five years which he spent in the ticket wagon of the Ringling show. On every page of this book is a picture of some prominent building or scenery of some kind in every town in which they exhibited during that season.

It was during the season of 1901 on July 30 that the show exhibited in Janesville. A picture was taken from the Milwaukee Street Bridge of Rock River looking north and is certainly a fine one. In the write-up of the days happenings the writer says that the wives of all the Ringlings were here as well as many prominent friends from Baraboo, including Mrs. August Ringling, mother of the Ringling brothers, and this was without doubt the last visit paid to Janesville by Mother Ringling.

In the afternoon of that day with my family and a few friends, I attended the show and Al Ringling insisted that we come again in the evening, "For," he said, "I want to visit with you tonight." As he was equestrian director of the show, he said he would have two chairs near the entrance to the dressing room where we could sit and visit while the show was going on. This I did and before I had been seated five minutes a middle-aged gentleman came over and shook hands and asked me if I did not know him. As I had not seen him for many years, it took me a little while to place him, but I finally said, "This is William Holloway." Mr. Holloway's home was in Delavan only twenty miles away and while I had known him in the business for some years, I never knew that Delavan was his home. When I asked him what he was doing with the show he said, "The wire act that the boy and girl do belongs to me." While to the public these two were brother and sister the truth was they were both boys and had a contract with Mr. Holloway for three years. Mr. Holloway had put them in the business and they did the finest double wire act that I ever saw before or since. He had grown too old for the act in which he had worked for many years, so he took the two young men as apprentices for three years, one being dressed as a girl, and they soon learned to do an act which easily took

the first place for its kind in the business.

During my years with the Adam Forepaugh show I never knew them to exhibit in a town where an old timer in the circus business was buried that they did not only take the band, but many dollars' worth of flowers, and march to the cemetery where they would hold a short service and decorate the grave with flowers. This did not necessarily mean that he was a manager or prominent around the show, for whether he was a workingman, either as a canvasman or a driver, he was always shown the same respect.



Without doubt the most unique of all these services was the service held by the Ringling show in Los Angeles for our martyred president, William McKinley. Circus people have hearts as well as other folks, and the making of a holiday for the populace is not their only virtue. Deep down in the breasts of even the clowns and the side show freaks is a wellspring of patriotism, and this was drawn upon at the services for President McKinley.

The Ringling brothers, although at a great loss to themselves on this occasion, with commendable respect for the government to which they owe allegiance and to the great body of American people from which they derive their patronage, abandoned their afternoon performance in order that their employees might join with the public generally in giving honor to the foremost American of his time.

Few as the holidays of the hard-worked circus people are, they did not engage in revelry or any unseemly pleasures when given an afternoon off from their arduous

vocation. With true loyalty to the stars and stripes and with most profound reverence and respect for the dead president, they joined in holding memorial services that in sincerity and devotion were exceeded by none of the many remarkable outpourings of grief and reverence the land over.

Out at the circus grounds that afternoon the army of people who make up the great Ringling show assembled in solemn conclave to give utterance to their sorrow that one so great and good and of such unexcelled service to his country, should be stricken down at the zenith of his fame by the hand of a most vile assassin.

The stage in the center of the big tent was decorated, as it never was before for this most unusual event. An immense American flag was swung up for a background, surrounded by rosettes of black and streamers of crepe. In the center was a draped oil painting of the president. Here among the surroundings usually devoted to mirth and pleasure, solemn religious services were held. None but circus people were admitted as it was simply intended to be a quiet outpouring of the feelings of grief that stirred the hearts of the show men and show women.

It was like a family gathering, this audience of travelers from all parts of the wide world, and a more cosmopolitan aggregation it would be hard to find. The gay entertainers of the night before were now mourners decked in all the habiliments of woe.

The audience numbered about five hundred. The Ringling brothers were present with their wives besides all the members of the executive staff, freaks, clowns, acrobats, jugglers, trick riders, animal trainers, musicians, stable men, canvasmen and others. The bearded lady, the snake charmer, the fat woman, the female dwarf, the fluffy haired albino and other freaks of the side shows-Philippines, Japs, Turks and representatives of other far off lands mingled in one common throng of mourners.

Rev. Dr. J. F. Leland of the Universalist Church conducted the exercises. The circus band played a dirge and the minister then ordered

a feeling prayer after which the entire assemblage joined in singing *Lead, Kindly Light*. Hymn books had been provided and although some of the men could not sing it well, they all tried. There were, however, many good voices and the great tent was made to ring with the murdered presidents favorite hymn.

Dr. Leland then delivered an address which was full of Christian love and tenderness. He told, in brief, the story of the president's life from boyhood to the presidential chair and of the assassination. His remarks were accorded close attention and evidently made a deep impression on the audience as many a cheek was wet with tears when the eulogy of the martyred president was completed.

But the feeling of the varied audience did not find full vent before the close of the service when the grand old hymn *Nearer My God to Thee*, was chanted by the assembled voices, some of them sweet and clear as a bell.

It seemed as though the familiar words-familiar to many of the singers from childhood days-thrilled the very chords of the strange assemblage. Eyes not moistened for years, perhaps, brimmed over with tears as the solemn strains filled the great tent.

When the last note died away and Dr. Leland stood up to pronounce the benediction, suppressed sobs were heard and scarcely a dry eye could be found.

#### July 8, 1916

While much has been written about the elephant and its habits, both in its wild state and in captivity, many interesting stories have not been told about it.

It was along in the early 80's with the Adam Forepaugh show that a young camel was born, and as the mother of the youngster and an old elephant had been stationed side by side in the menagerie for years, when the youngster arrived the

elephant took great interest in him. For days and weeks when the elephant was given his hay and oats he never forgot the young camel, for everyday he would pass over to the camel a bunch of hay and two or three hand fulls of oats which was more than the mother of the youngster would think of doing. If the elephants were fed about the time the show opened, the crowds would gather around and watch the old elephant care for the young camel which attracted more attention than all the balance of the menagerie.

The elephant was known as "Old Mary" and was one of the wisest of all the herd which consisted of twenty-nine. It was Old Mary whose everyday task was to push the wagons in the menagerie around into place. When the show was late into town and everybody was on the run to get ready for the afternoon performance, no one knew that time was precious better than did Old Mary. When the keeper would grab the pole of the cage and tell Old Mary to get a hustle on her, she was the one that would work as fast as the men.

Of all large animals, the elephant excites the greatest interest being the largest now known to exist. With build and habits distinctly its own, no wonder that young and old never seem to tire of looking at the wonderful creatures.

There are only two species of elephant--the African and Indian. They are distinguished most noticeably by the size of their ears, the African breed having large umbrella ears, much larger than those of the Indian elephant. Both the male and female African elephant have tusks, while only the male of the Indian kind grow there. The African elephant is the larger of the two.

In age the elephant is said to outlive any other animal and has been known to reach the age of 200 years.

They are not full grown until 25 years old. In size they reach enormous proportions.

Jumbo, famous as a large specimen, was nearly 12 feet in height and weighed seven tons with a length of body of 30 feet. Tusks over 20 feet in length and weighing 250 pounds are often taken from these animals. The female gives birth to young only every second year.

The elephants trunk is one of the most interesting parts of its curious physical make-up. The trunk consists of cartilaginous rings at the end of which is a kind of finger with which the animal can pick up a pin or pull large branches from trees. Through this elongated nose the animal smells and breathes, the sense of smell being very pronounced. With this extraordinary instrument the elephant can fight and conquer the most ferocious beasts of prey; enormous weight can be lifted or the gentlest caress given.

In order to support their great weight, the hind legs do not have the joints or knees found on other four-legged animals. This arrangement however, is of much value to them in climbing or descending great activities which they are able to do with the greatest ease, going places totally inaccessible to the horse. They are very fond of water and are splendid swimmers. Their natural food consists of succulent plants of which they consume enormous quantities. Five hundred pounds of hay is a normal feed for an elephant. In their wild state they travel in herds, led by an old male. When hurried or frightened, they travel in a rapid trot, outrunning the swiftest horse.

While readily tamed and trained, they have some peculiarities that require strict observance on the part of trainers. The elephant absolutely insists on kind treatment which they will return in full measure. They seldom acknowledge but one master. Be this one kind, the elephant will show affection for him and give the most intelligent service of any known dumb animal. No animal will face danger more obediently at man's bidding, nor prove a more formidable enemy, nor nurse wrong treatment for a longer length of time. Cases have been known where a keeper has



abused an elephant and the animal has met and killed the keeper for the treatment many years later. When kindly dealt with they form the greatest attachment for the human and display remarkable intelligence.

The elephants comprising the group with the Barnes show are recognized as being among the best educated in existence.

Although Janesville without question easily carries off the honors when it comes to giving a circus parade, in different parts of the country societies and lodges of different kinds give what they call a "Society Circus."

One of the most unique of this kind was given in Chicago a short time ago by what is known as the Hawthorne Club. Although the club furnished most of the talent from their order, they added several high class acts hired especially for the occasion. This was staged on Saturday evening, June 18.

The big top, 100 by 300, was erected on the recreation grounds of the Western Electric Company and was flanked by a sideshow tent 50 by 90, a dressing tent 40 by 80 and a dining tent 30 by 70. The grounds and tents were easily decorated with flags, banners, etc., especially the side show which was resplendent with bright banners calling attention to the wonders within. James Beatty was very much in evidence at this point. All the tents, masques, seats and banners were erected by the United States Tent and Awning Company and certainly were a credit to this firm. No detail had been overlooked, and the general bright, snappy appearance reminded one of the opening day of a big circus.

Two performances were given, one at 7 and one at 9 P.M. Although a heavy rain fell during the early part of the evening, both performances were crowded. Admission was by card and only members of the Hawthorne Club were admitted.

Among the professional acts were Hill's Society circus, Strassle's animals, Pamba Japs, Five Casting Campbells, Five Martells and Rhoda

Royal's famous elephants, Tiny, May and Chin Chin.

A convivial canvasman on the Gentry show became wedded to his liquor during the recent engagement of the circus in Cleveland so that all desire to assist in the necessary manipulation of the tops left him. The Gentrys parted with his services with regret and dispatch. During the matinee next day the canvasman-still "pickled" lifted the sidewall of the menagerie tent, untied the halter strap of a camel and led it out of the top. He got a block away with the beast before Frank Gentry, heading half a hundred racing employees, caught him.

### July 15, 1916

On Monday last the Ringling show was billed to show in Rockford, Ill., and when I received the route card of the show and saw Rockford billed for Monday, July 10th, I soon made up my mind to get an early start for Rockford Monday morning. I left a call for five o'clock so as to get the first Interurban which left at 5:30, but beat the call by fifteen minutes, and long before time for the car to leave Janesville, I was comfortably seated waiting for the start.

We landed in Rockford at 7:30 and it was not so long until I was shaking hands with old friends and new ones and was back into the business again, if only for a day.

The show had a Sunday run of 200 miles from South Bend Indiana, but

Mrs. Starr, as Zazel, was featured on a Barnum & London poster. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.



arrived in good time about nine o'clock Sunday morning. The parade Monday was out on time and covered a distance of more than six miles. While it was an ideal circus day, the weather, as the Englishman would say, was "beastly" hot which made it very hard on the people both in the parade and in the show.

The vast crowd commenced early to wind their way to the show grounds, and by the time the show was ready to commence, nearly every seat in the vast tent was taken. On account of the extreme heat and my witnessing the show in the Coliseum in Chicago, I only stayed under the canvas long enough to see the grand entry and the beautiful spectacular. The rest of the day I put in visiting around on the outside and took dinner at the cook tent where there were nearly 1000 people seated at one time.

The show is on its way to the southwest and will come back in a northeasterly direction until they strike Janesville on August 16.

Although for a time the help proposition bothered the show earlier in the season, they have plenty of help now and can get up the canvas on scheduled time.

Mrs. George Oscar Starr, widow of the former general manager of the Barnum & Bailey circus, arrived on July 9th at New York from Liverpool on the American liner *Philadelphia* after carrying out her husband's expressed wish by scattering his ashes to the four winds.

"On the night of July 5," she said, "I emptied the ashes into a pocket in my skirt, went on deck and scattered them to the four winds."

Mrs. Starr, who is nearly seventy years old, was known in the show world in the '80's as "Zazel, the human cannon ball," and has been shot out of a gun into a net before thousands of persons in all parts of the world. Back in the '80's I traveled for several years with Mr. and Mrs. Starr, and George Starr was one of James A. Bailey's and P. T. Barnum's closest friends for many years. It was he that went in advance to Europe to

make contracts many months before the Barnum show arrived. For some years Mr. Starr was a stockholder in the show, but at the time the show left Europe, he and Mrs. Starr decided to stay and make their home in that country. Mr. Starr sold his stock in the show, and in or near London has been their home until after the death of Mr. Starr, something like a year ago. It is said that Mrs. Starr expects to spend the balance of her days in this country.

A fifth big circus, one which is claimed will equal, if not surpass, any of the three big recognized circuses now before the public, will be launched next season, sponsored by the United States Circus Corporation organized last week with a capital of \$1,000,000 and which will have for its general manager Frank P. Spellman. Back of the organization are a number of prominent Wall Street financiers together with a few old-time show people who have announced their determination to put out a circus that will rank with the best of them.

It will be a sixty or sixty-five car outfit embracing novelties which have not hitherto been introduced in the tented world, included among which features will be four rings, together with hippodrome and double platforms. Everything from the 150 foot round top to the stakes will be brand new. Arrangements already have been perfected for a menagerie which it is claimed will out-rival that of any outfit now on the road, and there will be a big spectacular feature combined with wild west which should make for the new aggregation the biggest kind of publicity.

The new corporation will hold its first annual meeting in New York this month at which time officers will be elected and arrangements made for opening permanent executive offices in the Knickerbocker Annex building the middle of the month. Already the opening date has been decided upon (April 22, next) and a full season will shortly be mapped out.

This new circus outfit--the title of which will not be announced for several weeks, is an outgrowth of the Winter Circus put on by the Messrs. Shubert at the New York Hippodrome a year ago last winter.

This big feature was produced and managed by Spellman who for the past four years has had out his widely advertised Spellman's Winter Circus.

Mr. Spellman has just returned to New York after a business trip to Baltimore and other cities and announces that every detail for the new outfit has been mapped out, that actual work on the construction of wagons will be started within the next few weeks and that long before winter, the circus will be in such shape that it will be possible to gain a pretty fair idea of its proportion.

Just who will be associated with Spellman in the managing of the new circus has not yet been divulged, but it is intimated that names well known in the tented world will be included in the roster when it is announced.

Frank P. Spellman, who later organized the United States Motorized Circus in 1918.

"Plans for this new outfit have been formulating ever since the close of the Hippodrome Circus," said Mr. Spellman. "It was at first planned by those back of the project to put out a ten or twenty car show, but I insisted upon the larger outfit contending that nothing but one on a par with the Barnum & Bailey, Ringling, Sells-Floto or Hagenbeck-Wallace outfits would have a ghost of a chance to pull down any money. Some six weeks ago it was decided to go through with the plan and the suggestion was made for the opening this season. I speedily vetoed this plan as it will take the better part of the year to get the circus in such shape as to make a proper showing when we do finally open next April."

**July 22, 1916**

A few days ago an old friend of mine by the name of Billie Armstrong, who has spent many years in the show business in an official capacity with the Hagenbeck-Wallace shows, while on his way

from St. Paul to Chicago, stopped over one train to visit over old times in the show business. During our rehearsal of the old days he said, "Dave, you must remember William Parmley, better known possibly in the business as 'Broncho Bill' and," said he, "Parmley has got rich in the business. For more than twenty-five years Parmley has been what is known in the business as the program man and travels about two weeks ahead of the show, getting out programs and where it is possible, getting the merchants to advertise on large muslin covers which would appear on the elephants and camels in the parade."

Parmley for many years was with the Hagenbeck-Wallace shows and later went with the Sells-Floto shows of Denver where he is at the present time. While Parmley was a good liver, always stopping at the best hotels, he always knew how to take care of his money and every fall would run in with a good bank account for his season's work.

Parmley for several years made Janesville his home

during the winter time and the late Ed Johnson of the Park Hotel was his close personal friend. Parmley would always hand Mr. Johnson several hundred dollars in the fall and draw on him during the winter as he needed the money. Several years ago Parmley commenced buying property in Columbus, Ohio where, Mr. Armstrong told me, he owned five different pieces of property on which he could secure considerably more money than he paid for them at the time of purchase. Mr. Armstrong said he also owned five or six different pieces of property in Denver which has been the winter quarters of the Sells-Floto shows and this property was sold at a big sacrifice to the owners as Denver for some years had been overbuilt. When the turn came, many people had to sacrifice by selling at the price the property was mortgaged for. But Mr. Armstrong



said it is conservative to say that William Parmley by his savings and shrewd investments is worth at least \$125,000 and all this was earned from his salary and a percentage on which Parmley worked and shrewd investments.

Bill Parmley has many friends in Janesville that will be glad to learn of his prosperity and that he could retire any day with plenty of this world's goods.

What's the big show? Why the circus, of course, and every other branch of the circus. Shakespeare, a deservedly popular playwright, used material for many centuries familiar to circus folks. Today we are, some of us, laboring to celebrate fittingly the three hundredth anniversary of his death or his birth or marriage or some other event important to man.

The sources from which he drew his inspiration we honor in just one way—by going to the circus whenever we can. The circus is the thing and always has been. The circus is the great reservoir that supplies the tiny trickling springs of drama, of vaudeville and of burlesque. The circus is a wellspring of amusement that never failed. Shakespearean revivals would be naught if the circus hadn't been. The shows the thing; the play comes afterward. The show—the circus—includes everything.

The big thing in Janesville's entertainment next month is the circus. This will be entertainment, big, comprehensive and valuable.

This is a touch of the elemental forces that drive the circus. The circus is all founded on the social fundamentals that we, outside of the circus, have been trying to understand with fair success—only fair—for a matter of thousands of years. We have gone here and there trying to find ways and means of living well and for each other's sake and never a philosopher has thought of looking into a circus. All philosophers look at the circus for fun. They look into their books for their philosophy. How well they have looked is no matter for cynical expression at this moment when the expression most certainly would be cynical if it were not for the circus example squarely in front. And it is all so simple. Circus people are family people to begin with. The cir-

cus is very, very old. The circus idea has been passed down through generations of performers and the beholding element of our worlds (us) has done a little, but not so much, as the people who, have done the work, generation after generation. They

family has been a good family for many years. Let us say that the circus has been a good family for many years as ours has been. That is conservative in statement even if a trifle unfair to the circus.

#### July 29, 1916

In a letter received from the Barnum shows a few days ago the writer tells how the show has made the longest eastern trip this season of any since the Barnum show has been under the management of the Ringling Brothers, and while the weather has been hot for some weeks they have been showing either in the seashore towns or up in the mountains and are stiff billed for several days ahead in that country. Everybody is in hopes they will stay in that part of the country until there is a change in the weather.

While visiting with Ollie Webb, who is manager of the Ringling Brothers cook tent, Mr. Webb stated that ever since hot weather set in that he had been obliged to use from seven to eight tons of ice everyday. Much of this Mr. Webb said went into the menagerie to cool off the polar bears and other animals that until their captivity lived in the cold regions.

About two tons of this he said went to the trains where it is distributed among the eighteen sleepers and used at the lunch counter which is kept open each evening until the train is loaded and ready to leave for the next town.

On Thursday morning last a little after nine o'clock the Sells-Floot shows passed through Janesville stopping long enough to change crews. It would be one o'clock or near that before the show would reach Rockford and be unloaded where they were to exhibit. As this was one of the hottest days of the season, great care would be necessary to keep many of the animals from suffering from the heat and for the people who started out to make a parade of some six miles in length or more at two o'clock in the afternoon which would be as early as they could possibly put out the parade. The people with the heavy wardrobes and helmets on must have suffered terribly with the heat so that even in the cir-



This elephant banner in a Hagenbeck-Wallace 1916 parade was sold by William Parmley.

themselves, the performers, have forgotten, if they ever knew, just when they started as families in acrobatics, in tumbling in pageant forming, in animal training, in aerial stunts, in all the varied activities of the circus.

I almost said "varied walks;" they jump. The circus life is founded way, way back on the family idea; the idea persists in the way the performers train each other and also in the spirit of the circus, its members.

Equestrians are all families and so are trapeze artists. The dainty little miss that you see hopping through hoops, alighting deftly upon the backs of flying steeds (this last a figure of speech), is probably the great-great-granddaughter of an equestrian and through all the successive generations there has been no circus break. She may be the mother of the baby that is being taken care of in the dressing tent, If she is, the baby will grow up and grow up in the circus to ride bareback or walk a high wire or hurdle through the air on trapeze bars. But she will be a circus woman and a circus lady.

Good families tolerate no other kind of man or woman and the circus

cus business, there is something to do more than to listen to the band play. The life of a musician with the circus is one of the hardest jobs in the business for they have to sit under the canvas and play almost constantly for two hours in the afternoon and the same in the evening. The average performer goes into the ring and does his act and is out in a few minutes, but the boys who furnish the music are the ones who are the constant workers and throughout the long term I was with the circus, they always had my sympathy.

The following from a New York paper giving the details of the passing of two close friends in the circus for many years, George Oscar Starr and Al Stuart [Stewart], reads like the story in a dime novel: "Mrs. George Starr arrived at New York from Liverpool, England on the American liner *Philadelphia* Sunday, July 9, after having carried out her deceased husband's final request, He desired that his body be cremated and his ashes scattered from a balloon, but the British authorities objected, so they were consigned to the waves in mid-ocean. This was done on July 5th.

"George Oscar Starr was for many years confidential European scout, agent and adviser to the late James A. Bailey of the Barnum & Bailey shows, and as fine a gentleman as the show world has ever known. After the death of Mr. Bailey, Mr. Starr was retained to protect Mrs. Bailey's interests for a season in connection with the late Al Stuart [Stewart]. Stuart [Stewart] went down with the *Titanic*. Now his body and Mr. Starr's ashes have found a common grave.

George O. Starr, managing director of Barnum & Bailey.

"Mrs. Starr will settle her husband's estate while here and then return to England which, by reason of the many years' residence there, has become home to her. Mrs. Starr won fame as a circus performer before she was married to Starr. In her act at Niblo's many years ago she

was loaded into the mouth of a cannon and fired to a trapeze on which she did stunts unusual for the period, finally falling into a net.

"She was known then as 'Zazel,' The Human Cannon Ball. It was in this perilous thriller that an unexpected explosion almost crippled her for life. She still suffers from the spinal injury that forced her to abandon strenuous circus work."

An old letter dated Aug. 5, 1901 while the show was on exhibition in Kansas City, Mo., tells in detail the danger of a fire which took place directly across the street from where all of the big tents of the Ringling shows were located. What might have been a terrible calamity occurred just as the mammoth crowds were surging into the big show. The Exposition Building was a mammoth structure covering nearly a square and located directly across the street from the main entrance to the circus. Its frame work was of steel and the roof of glass. It might have been termed at one time a crystal palace. For years it was used as a convention hall and many large gatherings have been assembled under its roof. The building had been recently condemned and was to have been destroyed by dynamite in a few days. About 1:30 p.m. a cloud of thick, black smoke was discovered

ascending from the lower center of the big building, and in a few moments it was a mass of crackling flames and smoke. "Our danger was quickly realized and immediately everyone connected with the show was on the jump. Should one spark come our way it would mean destruction to our entire outfit and

probably a terrible loss of life. No one can tell. Strong men worked with might and main to save life and property from destruction. Henry Ringling took the situation in at a glance and saw that the crowds of people who were entering the big show were quietly removed to a place of safety, while those already inside

were advised as to the best means for their welfare.

"The side show, black top and cook-house being nearest the burning building, were quickly loaded and packed up. Husky canvasmen climbed the big tops and kept them well saturated with water, and one flying spark would have finished us as the tops are all covered with a coating of paraffin and easily ignited. William Spencer and Pearl Souder with their forces were working with red cheeks and set faces to get their animals removed to a safe place. Charles Roy and his men of the chandelier department had a hard struggle to avoid explosion. Delavan, Meek and Jenkins had already looked out for their horses and ponies. Ed Shipp and the performers were juggling trunks to a place of safety. Even the ladies were lending a hand. Ollie Webb and his cook house crew were "right up against it," but they stuck until the last dish and piece of canvas was packed away. Looking from a distance one could see Stewart Webb standing like a statue, the flames and smoke at times coming within close range, giving orders and superintending his boys, and brave boys they were and justly entitled to much credit.

"Fred Bresee, the chef, looked as if there wasn't much breeze coming his way, but Fred is used to those warm waves. Art Boyd was red in the face while the two Dicks, Stewart and Ware sang merrily, *There's a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight*. Lew Graham, Borella and John Walker were kept busy at the front delivering official announcements, and above all stood Messrs. Otto and Al Ringling quietly delivering orders and directing the entire proceedings.

"In a few minutes the Kansas City fire department had run a line of hose onto the grounds and were playing constant streams of water on the tents. They did effective work but the credit was due chiefly to good management the work of our own brave men and the kind hand of Providence. If the wind had varied a particle in our direction nothing could have saved us from total destruction.

"At 3 o'clock the walls toppled in. The big show doors were reopened, the sideshows were up and doing



business, and we ate supper in the cookhouse. The matinee was packed and at night thousands were turned away. It was a day long to be remembered."

#### August 5, 1916

In a letter received from the Barnum show a few days ago, the writer gives an interesting story of the two ball teams connected with the show this season. These two teams are made up on one side by the clowns and the other of ticket sellers of the show. They usually play two or three times a week, always between the afternoon and night show.

The writer says that several games during the season have been close finishes. Even all the workingmen around the show and the ladies are there rooting for their favorite team at every game, and in a few instances where they played on baseball grounds, hundreds of citizens would turn out and take great interest in the games as several of the players in both teams have become expert players.

"The show is coming west and a short time ago it was intimated that the Sells-Floto and Barnum show would clash for country in the far west where both shows are billed, but when Charles Ringling was asked of the likelihood of a clash, he simply shook his head and said, "Nothing doing. There is plenty of country and the two shows will not interfere with each other in any way."

As the Ringling show also had two ball teams, it may be possible that Janesville will be treated to a baseball game between the afternoon and night shows on August 16.

As the coming of the Ringling show is close at hand perhaps the training and habits of the monkeys and the kangaroo would not be out of place, for of all the cages in the menagerie, these two are the ones that always attract the greatest attention.

No other animal attracts and holds the attention of people longer than the monkey. As a source of delight to the little people and a study for their elders, the monkey stands supreme. This is due no doubt to its grotesque appearance and its close resemblance to man--a caricature of the



The Barnum & Bailey Circus baseball team.

human race, it seems. Their apparent efforts to mimic the human is at times ludicrous to an extreme.

These animals are usually described in three classes: apes, which have no tails; baboons, which have very short ones and monkeys, which have very long ones. There are many varieties of each kind. All are inhabitants of the tropics, living principally on fruits. Their agility as climbers is said to excel that of any other animal. They usually travel and live in bands of two hundred or more, the old males in command, the females occupied in caring for the young.

The chimpanzee resembles man more than any other monkey. Its height is sometimes five feet. It can travel quite well on its rear handfeet, but usually uses all four. Their arms are possessed of tremendous strength and they can break limbs of trees that two ordinary men could not even bend.

The orangutan is one of the largest of the ape family and sometimes attains a height of five feet. Its arms are of extraordinary length and possessed of great strength. The gorilla is of this species of monkey and is considered the hardest to train of the larger species.

Many strange things are characteristic of the monkey family, one of which is their ability to discover water at great distances, both above and below ground. When in captivity the monkey is usually gentle, intelligent and affectionate and learns quite readily. Unfortunately they are heirs to pneumonia and consumption

and are exceedingly delicate. Very docile under good treatment, the monkey when mad or excited is a most ferocious animal. Their great strength and formidable tasks make their attacks something to be much feared.

They are captured in nets and traps. Another method is to place fermented beer where they congregate. Being

very fond of this beer, the monkeys soon drink themselves to a degree of intoxication that permits the native Negroes to go among them, the monkeys seeming to think the native a larger member of their tribe. Taking one of the old monkeys by the hand the native starts leading it away, when other monkeys nearby grab onto the hands of the lead monkey and in this manner a whole herd of the drunken animals are lead into captivity.

This strangely formed animal the kangaroo is a native of Australia and some of the smaller islands nearby. They live entirely on vegetable foods and congregate in herds, lead by the "old man," the natives' name for the leader.

Its method of traveling is by leaps and when in a hurry or frightened, the leaps cover a distance of twenty feet in length and ten feet in height, in fact, so swiftly can this animal get over the ground, that they can outrun a swift greyhound. The tail of the kangaroo is a great asset to its movements and is also a weapon of defense with which a very violent blow can be delivered. They sometimes catch an enemy with their forepaws and kill it with swift kicks of their hind feet which are armed with strong bony toes. They are also expert swimmers.

The female seldom produces more than one young at a time--an exceedingly diminutive creature, weighing scarcely more than a pound. It is reared in the abdominal pouch of the mother and goes there for sleep and protection until nearly grown. They are comparatively tame and take to training quite readily.

**August 12, 1916**

The big attraction at the Janesville fair which has just closed were the famous bareback riders, Mr. and Mrs. George Holland. As I knew Mrs. Holland was the daughter of the once famous rider Madame Dockrill, I soon made up my mind to see Mrs. Holland and inquire after the welfare of her mother, whom I had known for nearly forty years.

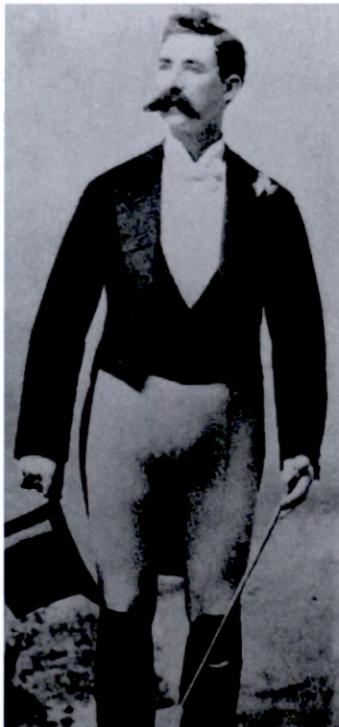
R. H. Dockrill.

"Why, Mr. Watt," Mrs. Holland said, "mother is here visiting me and you will find her over in the dressing room."

I was not long in getting to the dressing room and there in the door stood Madame Dockrill who left the Barnum show in 1872, brought to this country from Europe. Well do I remember their advertisements of Madame Dockrill in all the newspapers and on the billboards for they issued a challenge of \$20,000 for any woman who could outride her.

While Madame Dockrill has been out of the business for years, she has grown old gracefully and her decided French accent and her snow white hair makes her an interesting character. She told me how pleased she was to meet one who knew her in her greatness, for now, said she, "I am living largely in the past."

Well do I remember her picture on the billboard and the challenge issued by P. T. Barnum. When I asked her if she thought the public would recognize her today if she stood in front of the billboard of '72 and the picture that the Barnum show pasted of her, she simply shrugged her shoulders and said, "Oh dear, no, but those were the days when I tried so hard every afternoon and evening to please the public and fulfill every promise made them of me by the Barnum Show. Do you know, Dave, that up to the time of the death of both P. T. Barnum and



James A. Bailey, they were among my warmest friends. I know they always gave me credit of being one of their best drawing cards and all through our business associations, we never had any misunderstanding. While it was hard for me to leave my own country and come to America for the first time, I never have regretted it."

R. H. Dockrill, the Madame's husband, is the manager and equestrian director of Howe's Great London show and is still in the business. They make their home in Chicago and Madame Dockrill is here only

for the week to visit her youngest daughter, Mrs. George Holland. Both the Dockrills and the Hollands have been in the business for generations back and Mr. and Mrs. George Holland are among the wealthiest salaried circus people today in the country. They have a nice winter home at Biloxi, Miss., where they spend much of their time in the winter when not on the road.

It is friends like Madame Dockrill and Mr. and Mrs. Holland that the writer is always proud to count among his friends. Come again! The Janesville people will always give you a warm welcome.

Madam Dockrill

If your small boy is missing from the breakfast table Wednesday morning, don't be worried about him and imagine he has wandered away from home while in his sleep or has finally carried out a threat to "go out West and fight Indians," for he will have done neither of those things. He will merely repeat a performance that every red-blooded youngster has carried out for generations past--he

will have "sat up all night" to see the circus come to town.

For while you will be languidly turning over in bed, trying to snatch a few more minutes of beauty sleep next Wednesday morning, a host of children will be gathered in excited groups in the railroad yards where the trams carrying the thousand wonders of Ringling Brothers circus will be unloaded. The show trains will arrive here shortly before dawn and soon after daylight, the work of detraining the mysterious red and golden wagons will be underway.

In annexing itself to this city for Wednesday, the circus will add to the population more than 1,350 persons, a herd of forty-one elephants, 735 horses and 108 cages of wild animals. This organization travels on a train divided into four sections made up of eighty-nine cars. The first section that will arrive will bring the commissary department and the menagerie. This will be followed closely by two long, heavily laden baggage trains loaded with the canvases, wardrobe, scenery and other heavy properties of the show. The last train composed entirely of Pullman sleepers will carry the performers and executive staff.

Within a few hours after daylight many acres of canvas will be stretched and drawn skyward and the thousand wonders of Spangleland will be safely sheltered under them. That most

important adjunct of the big show--the cookhouse--will be one of the first tents to be erected and here the army of workingmen will flock as soon as the first hard labors of the morning are performed. A piping hot breakfast of chops, eggs, griddle cakes and coffee will be served to them and a similar meal will be served later to the host of performers.

The circus parade will leave the fairgrounds soon after ten o'clock Wednesday morning.

Two performances will be given in Janesville beginning at 2 p.m. and 8



p.m. The doors of the main tent will be opened an hour earlier to allow time for a visit to the big 108 cage zoo which is said to contain every known rarity of the wild animal line.

Fred Warrell

The program will open with the fairy spectacle, "Cinderella," which is said to be the most gorgeous of all the pantomimic productions ever staged by Ringling Brothers.



#### August 19, 1916

The Worlds' Greatest Show has come and gone. The Ringlings are certainly entitled to all that the name implies. The general roster and make-up of the show this year is much the same as previous years and is as follows.

Ringling brothers, proprietors and managers: Fred Worrell, general superintendent; Charles Thompson, adjuster; Tom Buckley, ticket agent and treasurer; Ollie Webb, manager of the cook tent. By the way, Mr. Webb is the nephew of the late James A. Webb of this city and has had charge of the commissary with the Ringlings for nineteen years. John Agee, equestrian director; Lew Graham, manager of the side shows and announcer in the big show; Sid Rubien, superintendent of concessions. Mr. Rubien's wife is the daughter of the late Spencer Alexander, better known to Janesville people as "Delavan." Mrs. Rubien was here spending the day with her husband and visiting relatives. Charles Rooney, boss hostler; Ben Parrell, front door man.

The newspaper staff is made up of four of the highest class men in the business. They are Ed P. Norwood, W. H. Williams, J. F. Donaldson and Lester N. Thompson. Mr. Thompson was the only newspaper representative here with the show and spent much of his time in looking after the comfort of newspaper men and their friends. With as high class a staff as these gentlemen looking after the interest of the Ringling brothers and the welfare of the public, it is not to

be wondered that the Ringlings spend much of their time away from the great show.

The show opened with the beautiful spectacle of "Cinderella," put on as only the Ringlings can, and it is no wonder that the public were amazed and showed their loyalty to the Ringling's show by giving them as good, if not a better, patronage than they ever received in Janesville before.

With-out question, the show from start to finish was the highest class that Janesville people have ever seen.

Among a few of the old timers that the writer has known for years was Al Miaco, the oldest and possibly the best pantomime clown in the business. You'd never suspect to see him in his work that he would be seventy-four years old his next birthday. Also Jules Tu-mour, another clown, who came from England in 1880 and his first engagement in this country was with the Burr Robbins show. Mr. Turnour re-mained with the Burr Robbins show for four years and a few years la-ter joined the Ringlings, and at the close of this season Mr. Tumour will have been with the Ring-ling show for twenty-seven years.

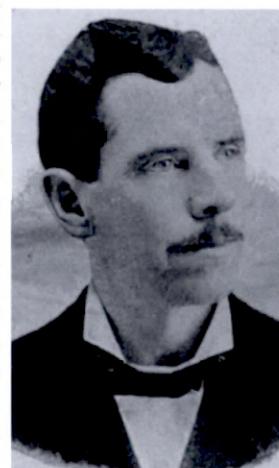
Last Wednesday was certainly one of the brightest days of my life, for all day long old friends that I have traveled with years ago and new ones that I have made since were waving their hands and "Helloing Dave." Each greeting seemed to carry a rose with it, for it came from the heart of warm friends that I made when in the business.

I took supper in the cook tent with my old friend, Charles Thompson, and a little later we found a shady place near the front door of the show where we rehearsed the old days back into the '70's and turned around and came over the road again. Charlie Thompson has been in the business continuously for thirty-five

years and can tell many interesting stories of happenings in his early career in the business. It was near the midnight hour when I bade them goodbye and they all said, "Dave, meet us at the Coliseum at the opening of the show next spring and the best will be none too good for you."

Although the big family that I once traveled with has been thinned out, my one wish is that they enjoyed the day's visit with me in Janesville as much as I did.

The Ringling brothers this year made a decided change in the outside shows. Heretofore, they had three or four different side shows, but last winter conceived the idea of consolidating all these shows and putting them under one canvas which was the largest ever erected for sideshow purposes. Lew Graham, superintendent told me it had made a decided success and he thought without question that this policy would be carried out in the future.



Jules Turnour

For years past we have all seen and heard much of the training of animals, but did you notice the old elephant when he adjusted his glasses and with his trunk turned over leaf after leaf in the telephone book until he found the number of his old friend and then called him up on the telephone. I think this without question is one of the highest class acts that I have ever seen performed by an educated elephant. Yet these animals are so wise and seldom ever forget that it is no question how far the trainers can go in educating them in different ways.

In a visit with Sid Rubien, manager of the concessions inside of the show, he told me that he started with the Ringlings when he was a mere boy still wearing his knee breeches and coppertoed shoes, and at the close of this season, he will have been with the show continuously for twenty-seven years. While he is still a young man, he is counted among the old timers in the business.

# CAMPBELL BROS. GREAT CONSOLIDATED SHOWS

